

# **The Deerslayer - The 1<sup>ST</sup> Warpath James Fenimore Cooper**



THE UNIVERSITY  
a/ADELAIDE

## CHAPTER 1

*"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore.  
There is society where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:  
I love not man the less, but nature more,  
From these our interviews, in which I steal  
From all I may be, or have been before,  
To mingle with the universe, and feel  
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal"*

—CHILDE HAROLD.

On the human imagination events produce the effects of time. Thus, he who has travelled far and seen much is apt to fancy that he has lived long; and the history that most abounds in important incidents soonest assumes the aspect of antiquity. In no other way can we account for the venerable air that is already gathering around American annals. When the mind reverts to the earliest days of colonial history, the period seems remote and obscure, the thousand changes that thicken along the links of recollections, throwing back the origin of the nation to a day so distant as seemingly to reach the mists of time; and yet four lives of ordinary duration would suffice to transmit, from mouth to mouth, in the form of tradition, all that civilized man has achieved within the limits of the republic. Although New York alone possesses a population materially exceeding that of either of the four smallest kingdoms of Europe, or materially exceeding that of the entire Swiss Confederation, it is little more than two centuries since the Dutch commenced their settlement, rescuing the region from the savage state. Thus, what seems venerable by an accumulation of changes is reduced to familiarity when we come seriously to consider it solely in connection with time.

This glance into the perspective of the past will prepare the reader to look at the pictures we are about to sketch, with less surprise than he might otherwise feel; and a few additional explanations may carry him back in imagination to the precise condition of society that we desire to delineate. It is matter of history that the settlements on the eastern shores of the Hudson, such as Claverack, Kinderhook, and even Poughkeepsie, were not regarded as safe from Indian incursions a century since; and there is still standing on the banks of the same river, and within musket-shot of the wharves of Albany, a residence of a younger branch of the Van Rensselaers, that has loopholes constructed for defence against the same crafty enemy, although it dates from a period scarcely so distant. Other similar memorials of the infancy of the country are to be found, scattered through what is now deemed the very centre of American civilization, affording the plainest proofs that all we possess of security from invasion and hostile violence is the growth of but little more than the time that is frequently fulfilled by a single human life.

The incidents of this tale occurred between the years 1740 and 1745, when the settled portions of the colony of New York were confined to the four Atlantic counties, a narrow belt of country on each side of the Hudson, extending from its mouth to the falls near its head, and to a few advanced "neighborhoods" on the Mohawk and the Schoharie. Broad belts of the virgin wilderness not only reached the shores of the first river, but they even crossed it, stretching away into New England, and affording forest covers to the noiseless moccasin of the native warrior, as he trod the secret and bloody war-path. A bird's-eye view of the whole region east of the Mississippi must then have offered one vast expanse of woods, relieved by a comparatively narrow fringe of cultivation along the sea, dotted by the glittering surfaces of lakes, and intersected by the waving lines of river. In such a vast picture of solemn solitude, the district of country we design to paint sinks into insignificance, though we feel encouraged to proceed by the conviction that, with slight and immaterial distinctions, he who succeeds in giving an accurate idea of any portion of this wild region must necessarily convey a tolerably correct notion of the whole.

Whatever may be the changes produced by man, the eternal round of the seasons is unbroken. Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, return in their stated order with a sublime precision, affording to man one of the noblest of all the occasions he enjoys of proving the high powers of his far-reaching mind, in compassing the laws that control their exact uniformity, and in calculating their never-ending revolutions.

Centuries of summer suns had warmed the tops of the same noble oaks and pines, sending their heats even to the tenacious roots, when voices were heard calling to each other, in the depths of a forest, of which the leafy surface lay bathed in the brilliant light of a cloudless day in June, while the trunks of the trees rose in gloomy grandeur in the shades

beneath. The calls were in different tones, evidently proceeding from two men who had lost their way, and were searching in different directions for their path. At length a shout proclaimed success, and presently a man of gigantic mould broke out of the tangled labyrinth of a small swamp, emerging into an opening that appeared to have been formed partly by the ravages of the wind, and partly by those of fire. This little area, which afforded a good view of the sky, although it was pretty well filled with dead trees, lay on the side of one of the high hills, or low mountains, into which nearly the whole surface of the adjacent country was broken.

"Here is room to breathe in!" exclaimed the liberated forester, as soon as he found himself under a clear sky, shaking his huge frame like a mastiff that has just escaped from a snowbank. "Hurrah! Deerslayer; here is daylight, at last, and yonder is the lake."

These words were scarcely uttered when the second forester dashed aside the bushes of the swamp, and appeared in the area. After making a hurried adjustment of his arms and disordered dress, he joined his companion, who had already begun his disposition for a halt.

"Do you know this spot!" demanded the one called Deerslayer, "or do you shout at the sight of the sun?"

"Both, lad, both; I know the spot, and am not sorry to see so useful a fri'nd as the sun. Now we have got the p'int of the compass in our minds once more, and 't will be our own faults if we let anything turn them topsy-turvy ag'in, as has just happened. My name is not Hurry Harry, if this be not the very spot where the land-hunters camped the last summer, and passed a week. See I yonder are the dead bushes of their bower, and here is the spring. Much as I like the sun, boy, I've no occasion for it to tell me it is noon; this stomach of mine is as good a time-piece as is to be found in the colony, and it already p'int to half-past twelve. So open the wallet, and let us wind up for another six hours' run."

At this suggestion, both set themselves about making the preparations necessary for their usual frugal but hearty meal. We will profit by this pause in the discourse to give the reader some idea of the appearance of the men, each of whom is destined to enact no insignificant part in our legend.

It would not have been easy to find a more noble specimen of vigorous manhood than was offered in the person of him who called himself Hurry Harry. His real name was Henry March but the frontiersmen having caught the practice of giving sobriquets from the Indians, the appellation of Hurry was far oftener applied to him than his proper designation, and not unfrequently he was termed Hurry Skurry, a nickname he had obtained from a dashing, reckless offhand manner, and a physical restlessness that kept him so constantly on the move, as to cause him to be known along the whole line of scattered habitations that lay between the province and the Canadas. The stature of Hurry Harry exceeded six feet four, and being unusually well proportioned, his strength fully realized the idea created by his gigantic frame. The face did no discredit to the rest of the man, for it was both good-humored and handsome. His air was free, and though his manner necessarily partook of the rudeness of a border life, the grandeur that pervaded so noble a physique prevented it from becoming altogether vulgar.

Deerslayer, as Hurry called his companion, was a very different person in appearance, as well as in character. In stature he stood about six feet in his moccasins, but his frame was comparatively light and slender, showing muscles, however, that promised unusual agility, if not unusual strength. His face would have had little to recommend it except youth, were it not for an expression that seldom failed to win upon those who had leisure to examine it, and to yield to the feeling of confidence it created. This expression was simply that of guileless truth, sustained by an earnestness of purpose, and a sincerity of feeling, that rendered it remarkable. At times this air of integrity seemed to be so simple as to awaken the suspicion of a want of the usual means to discriminate between artifice and truth; but few came in serious contact with the man, without losing this distrust in respect for his opinions and motives.

Both these frontiersmen were still young, Hurry having reached the age of six or eight and twenty, while Deerslayer was several years his junior. Their attire needs no particular description, though it may be well to add that it was composed in no small degree of dressed deer-skins, and had the usual signs of belonging to those who pass their time between the skirts of civilized society and the boundless forests. There was, notwithstanding, some attention to smartness and the picturesque in the arrangements of Deerslayer's dress, more particularly in the part connected with his arms and accoutrements. His rifle was in perfect condition, the handle of his hunting-knife was neatly carved, his powder-horn was ornamented with suitable devices lightly cut into the material, and his shot-pouch was decorated with wampum.

On the other hand, Hurry Harry, either from constitutional recklessness, or from a secret consciousness how little his

appearance required artificial aids, wore everything in a careless, slovenly manner, as if he felt a noble scorn for the trifling accessories of dress and ornaments. Perhaps the peculiar effect of his fine form and great stature was increased rather than lessened, by this unstudied and disdainful air of indifference.

"Come, Deerslayer, fall to, and prove that you have a Delaware stomach, as you say you have had a Delaware edication," cried Hurry, setting the example by opening his mouth to receive a slice of cold venison steak that would have made an entire meal for a European peasant; "fall to, lad, and prove your manhood on this poor devil of a doe with your teeth, as you've already done with your rifle."

"Nay, nay, Hurry, there's little manhood in killing a doe, and that too out of season; though there might be some in bringing down a painter or a catamount," returned the other, disposing himself to comply. "The Delawares have given me my name, not so much on account of a bold heart, as on account of a quick eye, and an active foot. There may not be any cowardice in overcoming a deer, but certain it is, there's no great valor."

"The Delawares themselves are no heroes," muttered Hurry through his teeth, the mouth being too full to permit it to be fairly opened, "or they would never have allowed them loping vagabonds, the Mingos, to make them women."

"That matter is not rightly understood — has never been rightly explained," said Deerslayer earnestly, for he was as zealous a friend as his companion was dangerous as an enemy; "the Mingos fill the woods with their lies, and misconstrue words and treaties. I have now lived ten years with the Delawares, and know them to be as manful as any other nation, when the proper time to strike comes."

"Harkee, Master Deerslayer, since we are on the subject, we may as well open our minds to each other in a man-to-man way; answer me one question; you have had so much luck among the game as to have gotten a title, it would seem, but did you ever hit anything human or intelligible: did you ever pull trigger on an enemy that was capable of pulling one upon you?"

This question produced a singular collision between mortification and correct feeling, in the bosom of the youth, that was easily to be traced in the workings of his ingenuous countenance. The struggle was short, however; uprightness of heart soon getting the better of false pride and frontier boastfulness.

"To own the truth, I never did," answered Deerslayer; "seeing that a fitting occasion never offered. The Delawares have been peaceable since my sojourn with 'em, and I hold it to be unlawful to take the life of man, except in open and generous warfare."

"What! did you never find a fellow thieving among your traps and skins, and do the law on him with your own hands, by way of saving the magistrates trouble in the settlements, and the rogue himself the cost of the suit!"

"I am no trapper, Hurry," returned the young man proudly: "I live by the rifle, a weapon at which I will not turn my back on any man of my years, between the Hudson and the St. Lawrence. I never offer a skin that has not a hole in its head besides them which nature made to see with or to breathe through."

"Ay, ay, this is all very well, in the animal way, though it makes but a poor figure alongside of scalps and ambushes. Shooting an Indian from an ambush is acting up to his own principles, and now we have what you call a lawful war on our hands, the sooner you wipe that disgrace off your character, the sounder will be your sleep; if it only come from knowing there is one enemy the less prowling in the woods. I shall not frequent your society long, friend Natty, unless you look higher than four-footed beasts to practice your rifle on."

"Our journey is nearly ended, you say, Master March, and we can part to-night, if you see occasion. I have a friend waiting for me, who will think it no disgrace to consort with a fellow-creature that has never yet slain his kind."

"I wish I knew what has brought that skulking Delaware into this part of the country so early in the season," muttered Hurry to himself, in a way to show equally distrust and a recklessness of its betrayal. "Where did you say the young chief was to give you the meeting!"

"At a small round rock, near the foot of the lake, where they tell me, the tribes are given to resorting to make their treaties, and to bury their hatchets. This rock have I often heard the Delawares mention, though lake and rock are equally strangers to me. The country is claimed by both Mingos and Mohicans, and is a sort of common territory to fish and hunt through, in time of peace, though what it may become in war-time, the Lord only knows!"

"Common territory" exclaimed Hurry, laughing aloud. "I should like to know what Floating Tom Hutter would say to that! He claims the lake as his own property, in virtue of fifteen years' possession, and will not be likely to give it up to

either Mingo or Delaware without a battle for it!”

“And what will the colony say to such a quarrel! All this country must have some owner, the gentry pushing their cravings into the wilderness, even where they never dare to venture, in their own persons, to look at the land they own.”

“That may do in other quarters of the colony, Deerslayer, but it will not do here. Not a human being, the Lord excepted, owns a foot of sile in this part of the country. Pen was never put to paper consarning either hill or valley hereaway, as I’ve heard old Tom say time and ag’in, and so he claims the best right to it of any man breathing; and what Tom claims, he’ll be very likely to maintain.”

“By what I’ve heard you say, Hurry, this Floating Tom must be an uncommon mortal; neither Mingo, Delaware, nor pale-face. His possession, too, has been long, by your tell, and altogether beyond frontier endurance. What’s the man’s history and natur’?”

“Why, as to old Tom’s human natur’, it is not much like other men’s human natur’, but more like a muskrat’s human natar’, seeing that he takes more to the ways of that animal than to the ways of any other fellow-creatur’. Some think he was a free liver on the salt water, in his youth, and a companion of a sartain Kidd, who was hanged for piracy, long afore you and I were born or acquainted, and that he came up into these regions, thinking that the king’s cruisers could never cross the mountains, and that he might enjoy the plunder peaceably in the woods.”

“Then he was wrong, Hurry; very wrong. A man can enjoy plunder peaceably nowhere.”

“That’s much as his turn of mind may happen to be. I’ve known them that never could enjoy it at all, unless it was in the midst of a jollification, and them again that enjoyed it best in a corner. Some men have no peace if they don’t find plunder, and some if they do. Human nature’ is crooked in these matters. Old Tom seems to belong to neither set, as he enjoys his, if plunder he has really got, with his darters, in a very quiet and comfortable way, and wishes for no more.”

“Ay, he has darters, too; I’ve heard the Delawares, who’ve hunted this a way, tell their histories of these young women. Is there no mother, Hurry?”

“There was once, as in reason; but she has now been dead and sunk these two good years.”

“Anan?” said Deerslayer, looking up at his companion in a little surprise.

“Dead and sunk, I say, and I hope that’s good English. The old fellow lowered his wife into the lake, by way of seeing the last of her, as I can testify, being an eye-witness of the ceremony; but whether Tom did it to save digging, which is no easy job among roots, or out of a consait that water washes away sin sooner than ‘arth, is more than I can say.”

“Was the poor woman uncommon wicked, that her husband should take so much pains with her body?”

“Not onreasonable; though she had her faults. I consider Judith Hutter to have been as graceful, and about as likely to make a good ind as any woman who had lived so long beyond the sound of church bells; and I conclude old Tom sunk her as much by way of saving pains, as by way of taking it. There was a little steel in her temper, it’s true, and, as old Hutter is pretty much flint, they struck out sparks once-and-a-while; but, on the whole, they might be said to live amicable like. When they did kindle, the listeners got some such insights into their past lives, as one gets into the darker parts of the woods, when a stray gleam of sunshine finds its way down to the roots of the trees. But Judith I shall always esteem, as it’s recommend enough to one woman to be the mother of such a creatur’ as her darter, Judith Hutter!”

“Ay, Judith was the name the Delawares mentioned, though it was pronounced after a fashion of their own. From their discourse, I do not think the girl would much please my fancy.”

“Thy fancy!” exclaimed March, taking fire equally at the indifference and at the presumption of his companion, “what the devil have you to do with a fancy, and that, too, consarning one like Judith? You are but a boy — a sapling, that has scarce got root. Judith has had men among her suitors, ever since she was fifteen; which is now near five years; and will not be apt even to cast a look upon a half-grown creatur’ like you!”

“It is June, and there is not a cloud atween us and the sun, Hurry, so all this heat is not wanted,” answered the other, altogether undisturbed; “any one may have a fancy, and a squirrel has a right to make up his mind touching a catamount.”

“Ay, but it might not be wise, always, to let the catamount know it,” growled March. “But you’re young and thoughtless, and I’ll overlook your ignorance. Come, Deerslayer,” he added, with a good-natured laugh, after pausing a moment to reflect, “come, Deerslayer, we are sworn friends, and will not quarrel about a light-minded, jilting jade, just because she happens to be handsome; more especially as you have never seen her. Judith is only for a man whose teeth

show the full marks, and it's foolish to be afraid of a boy. What did the Delawares say of the hussy? for an Indian, after all, has his notions of woman-kind, as well as a white man."

"They said she was fair to look on, and pleasant of speech; but over-given to admirers, and light-minded."

"They are devils incarnate! After all, what schoolmaster is a match for an Indian, in looking into nature! Some people think they are only good on a trail or the war-path, but I say that they are philosophers, and understand a man as well as they understand a beaver, and a woman as well as they understand either. Now that's Judith's character to a ribbon! To own the truth to you, Deerslayer, I should have married the gal two years since, if it had not been for two particular things, one of which was this very light-mindedness."

"And what may have been the other?" demanded the hunter, who continued to eat like one that took very little interest in the subject.

"The other was an insatiable about her having me. The hussy is handsome, and she knows it. Boy, not a tree that is growing in these hills is straighter, or waves in the wind with an easier bend, nor did you ever see the doe that bounded with a more natural motion. If that was all, every tongue would sound her praises; but she has such failings that I find it hard to overlook them, and sometimes I swear I'll never visit the lake again."

"Which is the reason that you always come back? Nothing is ever made more sure by swearing about it."

"Ah, Deerslayer, you are a novelty in these particulars; keeping as true to education as if you had never left the settlements. With me the case is different, and I never want to clinch an idea, that I do not feel a wish to swear about it. If you know'd all that I know concerning Judith, you'd find a justification for a little cussing. Now, the officers sometimes stray over to the lake, from the forts on the Mohawk, to fish and hunt, and then the creature seems beside herself! You can see in the manner which she wears her finery, and the airs she gives herself with the gallants."

"That is unseemly in a poor man's darter," returned Deerslayer gravely, "the officers are all gentry, and can only look on such as Judith with evil intentions."

"There's the unsatiable, and the damper! I have my misgivings about a particular captain, and Jude has no one to blame but her own folly, if I'm right. On the whole, I wish to look upon her as modest and becoming, and yet the clouds that drive among these hills are not more unsatiable. Not a dozen white men have ever laid eyes upon her since she was a child, and yet her airs, with two or three of these officers, are extinguishers!"

"I would think no more of such a woman, but turn my mind altogether to the forest; that will not deceive you, being ordered and ruled by a hand that never wavers."

"If you know'd Judith, you would see how much easier it is to say this than it would be to do it. Could I bring my mind to be easy about the officers, I would carry the gal off to the Mohawk by force, make her marry me in spite of her whiffling, and leave old Tom to the care of Hetty, his other child, who, if she be not as handsome or as quick-witted as her sister, is much the most dutiful."

"Is there another bird in the same nest?" asked Deerslayer, raising his eyes with a species of half-awakened curiosity, "the Delawares spoke to me only of one."

"That's natural enough, when Judith Hutter and Hetty Hutter are in question. Hetty is only comely, while her sister, I tell thee, boy, is such another as is not to be found between this and the sea: Judith is as full of wit, and talk, and cunning, as an old Indian orator, while poor Hetty is at the best but 'compass' meant us."

"Anan?" inquired, again, the Deerslayer.

"Why, what the officers call 'compass meant us,' which I understand to signify that she means always to go in the right direction, but sometimes does not know how. 'Compass' for the point, and 'meant us' for the intention. No, poor Hetty is what I call on the verge of ignorance, and sometimes she stumbles on one side of the line, and sometimes on the other."

"They are beings that the Lord has in his special care," said Deerslayer, solemnly; "for he looks carefully to all who fall short of their proper share of reason. The red-skins honor and respect them who are so gifted, knowing that the Evil Spirit delights more to dwell in an artful body, than in one that has no cunning to work upon."

"I'll answer for it, then, that he will not remain long with poor Hetty; for the child is just 'compass meant us,' as I have told you. Old Tom has a feeling for the gal, and so has Judith, quick-witted and glorious as she is herself; else would I not answer for her being altogether safe among the sort of men that sometimes meet on the lake shore."

"I thought this water an unknown and little-frequented sheet," observed the Deerslayer, evidently uneasy at the idea of being too near the world.

"It's all that, lad, the eyes of twenty white men never having been laid on it; still, twenty true-bred frontiersmen — hunters and trappers, and scouts, and the like — can do a deal of mischief if they try. 'T would be an awful thing to me, Deerslayer, did I find Judith married, after an absence of six months!"

"Have you the gal's faith, to encourage you to hope otherwise?"

"Not at all. I know not how it is: I'm good-looking, boy — that much I can see in any spring on which the sun shines — and yet I could not get the hussy to a promise, or even a cordial willing smile, though she will laugh by the hour. If she has dared to marry in my absence, she'd be like to know the pleasures of widowhood afore she is twenty!"

"You would not harm the man she has chosen, Hurry, simply because she found him more to her liking than yourself!"

"Why not! If an enemy crosses my path, will I not beat him out of it! Look at me! am I a man like to let any sneaking, crawling, skin-trader get the better of me in a matter that touches me as near as the kindness of Judith Hutter! Besides, when we live beyond law, we must be our own judges and executioners. And if a man should be found dead in the woods, who is there to say who slew him, even admitting that the colony took the matter in hand and made a stir about it?"

"If that man should be Judith Hutter's husband, after what has passed, I might tell enough, at least, to put the colony on the trail."

"You! — half-grown, venison-hunting bantling! You dare to think of informing against Hurry Harry in so much as a matter touching a mink or a woodchuck!"

"I would dare to speak truth, Hurry, consarning you or any man that ever lived."

March looked at his companion, for a moment, in silent amazement; then seizing him by the throat with both hands, he shook his comparatively slight frame with a violence that menaced the dislocation of some of the bones. Nor was this done jocularly, for anger flashed from the giant's eyes, and there were certain signs that seemed to threaten much more earnestness than the occasion would appear to call for. Whatever might be the real intention of March, and it is probable there was none settled in his mind, it is certain that he was unusually aroused; and most men who found themselves throttled by one of a mould so gigantic, in such a mood, and in a solitude so deep and helpless, would have felt intimidated, and tempted to yield even the right. Not so, however, with Deerslayer. His countenance remained unmoved; his hand did not shake, and his answer was given in a voice that did not resort to the artifice of louder tones, even by way of proving its owner's resolution.

"You may shake, Hurry, until you bring down the mountain," he said quietly, "but nothing beside truth will you shake from me. It is probable that Judith Hutter has no husband to slay, and you may never have a chance to waylay one, else would I tell her of your threat, in the first conversation I held with the gal."

March released his grip, and sat regarding the other in silent astonishment.

"I thought we had been friends," he at length added; "but you've got the last secret of mine that will ever enter your ears."

"I want none, if they are to be like this. I know we live in the woods, Hurry, and are thought to be beyond human laws — and perhaps we are so, in fact, whatever it may be in right — but there is a law and a law-maker, that rule across the whole continent. He that flies in the face of either need not call me a friend."

"Damme, Deerslayer, if I do not believe you are at heart a Moravian, and no fair-minded, plain-dealing hunter, as you've pretended to be!"

"Fair-minded or not, Hurry, you will find me as plaindealing in deeds as I am in words. But this giving way to sudden anger is foolish, and proves how little you have sojourned with the red man. Judith Hutter no doubt is still single, and you spoke but as the tongue ran, and not as the heart felt. There's my hand, and we will say and think no more about it."

Hurry seemed more surprised than ever; then he burst forth in a loud, good-natured laugh, which brought tears to his eyes. After this he accepted the offered hand, and the parties became friends.

"'T would have been foolish to quarrel about an idee," March cried, as he resumed his meal, "and more like lawyers in the towns than like sensible men in the woods. They tell me, Deerslayer, much ill-blood grows out of ideas among the people in the lower counties, and that they sometimes get to extremities upon them."

“That do they,-that do they; and about other matters that might better be left to take care of themselves. I have heard the Moravians say that there are lands in which men quarrel even consarning their religion; and if they can get their tempers up on such a subject, Hurry, the Lord have Marcy on ’em. Howsoever, there is no occasion for our following their example, and more especially about a husband that this Judith Hutter may never see, or never wish to see. For my part, I feel more cur’osity about the feeble-witted sister than about your beauty. There’s something that comes close to a man’s feelin’s, when he meets with a fellow-creatur’ that has all the outward show of an accountable mortal, and who fails of being what he seems, only through a lack of reason. This is bad enough in a man, but when it comes to a woman, and she a young, and maybe a winning creatur’ it touches all the pitiful thoughts his natur’ has. God knows, Hurry, that such poor things be defenceless enough with all their wits about ’em; but it’s a cruel fortun’ when that great protector and guide fails ’em.”

“Hark, Deerslayer — you know what the hunters, and trappers, and peltry-men in general be; and their best friends will not deny that they are headstrong and given to having their own way, without much bethinking ’em of other people’s rights or feelin’s — and yet I don’t think the man is to be found, in all this region, who would harm Hetty Hutter, if he could; no, not even a red-skin.”

“Therein, fri’nd Hurry, you do the Delawares, at least, and all their allied tribes, only justice, for a red-skin looks upon a being thus struck by God’s power as especially under his care. I rejoice to hear what you say, however, I rejoice to hear it; but as the sun is beginning to turn towards the afternoon’s sky, had we not better strike the trail again, and make forward, that we may get an opportunity of seeing these wonderful sisters?”

Harry March giving a cheerful assent, the remnants of the meal were soon collected; then the travelers shouldered their packs, resumed their arms, and, quitting the little area of light, they again plunged into the deep shadows of the forest.





## CHAPTER 2

*"Thou'rt passing from the lake's green side,  
And the hunter's hearth away;  
For the time of flowers, for the summer's pride,  
Daughter! thou canst not stay."*

—MRS. HEMANS, "EDITH, A TALE OF THE WOODS" II. 191–94

Our two adventurers had not far to go. Hurry knew the direction, as soon as he had found the open spot and the spring, and he now led on with the confident step of a man assured of his object. The forest was dark, as a matter of course, but it was no longer obstructed by underbrush, and the footing was firm and dry. After proceeding near a mile, March stopped, and began to cast about him with an inquiring look, examining the different objects with care, and occasionally turning his eyes on the trunks of the fallen trees, with which the ground was well sprinkled, as is usually the case in an American wood, especially in those parts of the country where timber has not yet become valuable.

"This must be the place, Deerslayer," March at length observed; "here is a beech by the side of a hemlock, with three pines at hand, and yonder is a white birch with a broken top; and yet I see no rock, nor any of the branches bent down, as I told you would be the case."

"Broken branches are onskilful landmarks, as the least exper'enced know that branches don't often break of themselves," returned the other; "and they also lead to suspicion and discoveries. The Delawares never trust to broken branches, unless it is in friendly times, and on an open trail. As for the beeches, and pines, and hemlocks, why, they are to be seen on all sides of us, not only by twos and threes, but by forties, and fifties, and hundreds."

"Very true, Deerslayer, but you never calculate on position. Here is a beech and a hemlock —"

"Yes, and there is another beech and a hemlock, as loving as two brothers, or, for that matter, more loving than some brothers; and yonder are others, for neither tree is a rarity in these woods. I fear me, Hurry, you are better at trapping beaver and shooting bears, than at leading on a blindish sort of a trail. Ha! there's what you wish to find, a'ter all!"

"Now, Deerslayer, this is one of your Delaware pretensions, for hang me if I see anything but these trees, which do seem to start up around us in a most onaccountable and perplexing manner."

"Look this a way, Hurry — here, in a line with the black oak—don't you see the crooked sapling that is hooked up in the branches of the bass-wood, near it? Now, that sapling was once snow-ridden, and got the bend by its weight; but it never straightened itself, and fastened itself in among the bass-wood branches in the way you see. The hand of man did that act of kindness for it."

"That hand was mine!" exclaimed Hurry; "I found the slender young thing bent to the airth, like an unfortunate creatur' borne down by misfortune, and stuck it up where you see it. After all, Deerslayer, I must allow, you're getting to have an oncommon good eye for the woods!"

"Tis improving, Hurry —'tis improving I will acknowledge; but 'tis only a child's eye, compared to some I know. There's Tamenund, now, though a man so old that few remember when he was in his prime, Tamenund lets nothing escape his look, which is more like the scent of a hound than the sight of an eye. Then Uncas, the father of Chingachgook, and the lawful chief of the Mohicans, is another that it is almost hopeless to pass unseen. I'm improving, I will allow — I'm improving, but far from being perfect, as yet."

"And who is this Chingachgook, of whom you talk so much, Deerslayer!" asked Hurry, as he moved off in the direction of the righted sapling; "a loping red-skin, at the best, I make no question."

"Not so, Hurry, but the best of loping red-skins, as you call 'em. If he had his rights, he would be a great chief; but, as it is, he is only a brave and just-minded Delaware; respected, and even obeyed in some things,'tis true, but of a fallen race, and belonging to a fallen people. Ah! Harry March, 'twould warm the heart within you to sit in their lodges of a winter's night, and listen to the traditions of the ancient greatness and power of the Mohicans!"

"Harkee, fri'nd Nathaniel," said Hurry, stopping short to face his companion, in order that his words might carry greater weight with them, "if a man believed all that other people choose to say in their own favor, he might get an oversized opinion of them, and an undersized opinion of himself. These red-skins are notable boasters, and I set down more than half of their traditions as pure talk."

"There is truth in what you say, Hurry, I'll not deny it, for I've seen it, and believe it. They do boast, but then that is a gift from natur'; and it's sinful to withstand nat'ral gifts. See; this is the spot you come to find!" This remark cut short the discourse, and both the men now gave all their attention to the object immediately before them. Deerslayer pointed out to his companion the trunk of a huge linden, or bass-wood, as it is termed in the language of the country, which had filled its time, and fallen by its own weight. This tree, like so many millions of its brethren, lay where it had fallen, and was mouldering under the slow but certain influence of the seasons. The decay, however, had attacked its centre, even while it stood erect in the pride of vegetation, bellowing out its heart, as disease sometimes destroys the vitals of animal life, even while a fair exterior is presented to the observer. As the trunk lay stretched for near a hundred feet along the earth, the quick eye of the hunter detected this peculiarity, and from this and other circumstances, he knew it to be the tree of which March was in search.

"Ay, here we have what we want," cried Hurry, looking in at the larger end of the linden; "everything is as snug as if it had been left in an old woman's cupboard. Come, lend me a hand, Deerslayer, and we'll be afloat in half an hour."

At this call the hunter joined his companion, and the two went to work deliberately and regularly, like men accustomed to the sort of thing in which they were employed. In the first place, Hurry removed some pieces of bark that lay before the large opening in the tree, and which the other declared to be disposed in a way that would have been more likely to attract attention than to conceal the cover, had any straggler passed that way. The two then drew out a bark canoe, containing its seats, paddles, and other appliances, even to fishing-lines and rods. This vessel was by no means small; but such was its comparative lightness, and so gigantic was the strength of Hurry, that the latter shouldered it with seeming ease, declining all assistance, even in the act of raising it to the awkward position in which he was obliged to hold it.

"Lead ahead, Deerslayer," said March, "and open the bushes; the rest I can do for myself."

The other obeyed, and the men left the spot, Deerslayer clearing the way for his companion, and inclining to the right or to the left, as the latter directed. In about ten minutes they both broke suddenly into the brilliant light of the sun, on a low gravelly point, that was washed by water on quite half its outline.

An exclamation of surprise broke from the lips of Deerslayer, an exclamation that was low and guardedly made, however, for his habits were much more thoughtful and regulated than those of the reckless Hurry, when on reaching the margin of the lake, he beheld the view that unexpectedly met his gaze. It was, in truth, sufficiently striking to merit a brief description. On a level with the point lay a broad sheet of water, so placid and limpid that it resembled a bed of the pure mountain atmosphere, compressed into a setting of hills and woods. Its length was about three leagues, while its breadth was irregular, expanding to half a league, or even more, opposite to the point, and contracting to less than half that distance, more to the southward. Of course, its margin was irregular, being indented by bays, and broken by many projecting, low points. At its northern, or nearest end, it was bounded by an isolated mountain, lower land falling off east and west, gracefully relieving the sweep of the outline. Still the character of the country was mountainous; high hills, or low mountains, rising abruptly from the water, on quite nine tenths of its circuit. The exceptions, indeed, only served a little to vary the scene; and even beyond the parts of the shore that were comparatively low, the background was high, though more distant.

But the most striking peculiarities of this scene were its solemn solitude and sweet repose. On all sides, wherever the eye turned, nothing met it but the mirror-like surface of the lake, the placid view of heaven, and the dense setting of woods. So rich and fleecy were the outlines of the forest, that scarce an opening could be seen, the whole visible earth, from the rounded mountain-top to the water's edge, presenting one unvaried hue of unbroken verdure. As if vegetation were not satisfied with a triumph so complete, the trees overhung the lake itself, shooting out towards the light; and there were miles along its eastern shore, where a boat might have pulled beneath the branches of dark Rembrandt-looking hemlocks, "quivering aspens," and melancholy pines. In a word, the hand of man had never yet defaced or deformed any part of this native scene, which lay bathed in the sunlight, a glorious picture of affluent forest grandeur, softened by the balminess of June, and relieved by the beautiful variety afforded by the presence of so broad an expanse of water.

"This is grand! —'tis solemn! —'tis an edication of itself, to look upon!" exclaimed Deerslayer, as he stood leaning on his rifle, and gazing to the right and left, north and south, above and beneath, in whichever direction his eye could wander; "not a tree disturbed even by red-skin hand, as I can discover, but everything left in the ordering of the Lord, to live and die according to his own designs and laws! Hurry, your Judith ought to be a moral and well disposed young woman, if she has passed half the time you mention in the centre of a spot so favored."

"That's naked truth; and yet the gal has the vagaries. All her time has not been passed here, howsoever, old Tom having the custom, afore I know'd him, of going to spend the winters in the neighborhood of the settlers, or under the guns of the forts. No, no, Jude has caught more than is for her good from the settlers, and especially from the gallantifying officers."

"If she has — if she has, Hurry, this is a school to set her mind right ag'in. But what is this I see off here, abreast of us, that seems too small for an island, and too large for a boat, though it stands in the midst of the water!"

"Why, that is what these galantine gentry from the forts call Muskrat Castle; and old Tom himself will grin at the name, though it bears so hard on his own natur' and character. 'Tis the stationary house, there being two; this, which never moves, and the other, that floats, being sometimes in one part of the lake and sometimes in another. The last goes by the name of the ark, though what may be the meaning of the word is more than I can tell you."

"It must come from the missionaries, Hurry, whom I have heard speak and read of such a thing. They say that the 'arth was once covered with water, and that Noah, with his children, was saved from drowning by building a vessel called an ark, in which he embarked in season. Some of the Delawares believe this tradition, and some deny it; but it behooves you and me, as white men born, to put our faith in its truth. Do you see anything of this ark?"

"'Tis down south, no doubt, or anchored in some of the bays. But the canoe is ready, and fifteen minutes will carry two such paddles as your'n and mine to the castle."

At this suggestion, Deerslayer helped his companion to place the different articles in the canoe, which was already afloat. This was no sooner done than the two frontiersmen embarked, and by a vigorous push sent the light bark some eight or ten rods from the shore. Hurry now took the seat in the stern, while Deerslayer placed himself forward, and by leisurely but steady strokes of the paddles, the canoe glided across the placid sheet, towards the extraordinary-looking structure that the former had styled Muskrat Castle. Several times the men ceased paddling, and looked about them at the scene, as new glimpses opened from behind points, enabling them to see farther down the lake, or to get broader views of the wooded mountains. The only changes, however, were in the new forms of the hills, the varying curvature of the bays, and the wider reaches of the valley south; the whole earth apparently being clothed in a gala-dress of leaves.

"This is a sight to warm the heart!" exclaimed Deerslayer, when they had thus stopped for the fourth or fifth time; "the lake seems made to let us get an insight into the noble forests; and land and water alike stand in the beauty of God's providence! Do you say, Hurry, that there is no man who calls himself lawful owner of all these glories?"

"None but the King, lad. He may pretend to some right of that natur', but he is so far away that his claim will never trouble old Tom Hutter, who has got possession, and is like to keep it as long as his life lasts. Tom is no squatter, not being on land; I call him a floater."

"I invy that man! I know it's wrong, and I strive ag'in the feelin', but I invy that man! Don't think, Hurry, that I'm consorting any plan to put myself in his moccasins, for such a thought doesn't harbor in my mind; but I can't help a little invy! 'Tis a nat'ral feelin', and the best of us are but nat'ral, a'ter all, and give way to such feelin's at times."

"You've only to marry Hetty to inherit half the estate," cried Hurry, laughing; "the gal is comely; nay, if it wasn't for her sister's beauty she would be even handsome; and then her wits are so small that you may easily convert her into one of your own way of thinking, in all things. Do you take Hetty off the old fellow's hands, and I'll engage he'll give you an interest in every deer you can knock over within five miles of his lake."

"Does game abound!" suddenly demanded the other, who paid but little attention to March's raillery.

"It has the country to itself. Scarce a trigger is pulled on it; and as for the trappers, this is not a region they greatly frequent. I ought not to be so much here myself, but Jude pulls one way, while the beaver pulls another. More than a hundred Spanish dollars has that creatur' cost me the last two seasons, and yet I could not forego the wish to look upon her face once more."

"Do the redmen often visit this lake, Hurry?" continued Deerslayer, pursuing his own train of thought.

"Why, they come and go; sometimes in parties, and sometimes singly. The country seems to belong to no native tribe in particular; and so it has fallen into the hands of the Hutter tribe. The old man tells me that some sharp ones have been wheedling the Mohawks for an Indian deed, in order to get a title out of the colony; but nothing has come of it, seeing that no one heavy enough for such a trade has yet meddled with the matter. The hunters have a good life-lease still of this wilderness."

“So much the better, so much the better, Hurry. If I was King of England, the man that felled one of these trees without good occasion for the timber, should be banished to a deserted and forlorn region, in which no fourfooted animal ever trod. Right glad am I that Chingachgook app’nted our meeting on this lake, for hitherto eye of mine never looked on such a glorious spectacle.”

“That’s because you’ve kept so much among the Delawares, in whose country there are no lakes. Now, farther north and farther west these bits of water abound; and you’re young, and may yet live to see ’em. But though there be other lakes, Deerslayer, there’s no other Judith Hutter!”

At this remark his companion smiled, and then he dropped his paddle into the water, as if in consideration of a lover’s haste. Both now pulled vigorously until they got within a hundred yards of the “castle,” as Hurry familiarly called the house of Hutter, when they again ceased paddling; the admirer of Judith restraining his impatience the more readily, as he perceived that the building was untenanted, at the moment. This new pause was to enable Deerslayer to survey the singular edifice, which was of a construction so novel as to merit a particular description.

Muskrat Castle, as the house had been facetiously named by some waggish officer, stood in the open lake, at a distance of fully a quarter of a mile from the nearest shore. On every other side the water extended much farther, the precise position being distant about two miles from the northern end of the sheet, and near, if not quite, a mile from its eastern shore. As there was not the smallest appearance of any island, but the house stood on piles, with the water flowing beneath it, and Deerslayer had already discovered that the lake was of a great depth, he was fain to ask an explanation of this singular circumstance. Hurry solved the difficulty by telling him that on this spot alone, a long, narrow shoal, which extended for a few hundred yards in a north and south direction, rose within six or eight feet of the surface of the lake, and that Hutter had driven piles into it, and placed his habitation on them, for the purpose of security.

“The old fellow was burnt out three times, atween the Indians and the hunters; and in one affray with the red-skins he lost his only son, since which time he has taken to the water for safety. No one can attack him here, without coming in a boat, and the plunder and scalps would scarce be worth the trouble of digging out canoes. Then it’s by no means sartain which would whip in such a scrimmage, for old Tom is well supplied with arms and ammunition, and the castle, as you may see, is a tight breastwork ag’in light shot.”

Deerslayer had some theoretical knowledge of frontier warfare, though he had never yet been called on to raise his hand in anger against a fellow-creature. He saw that Hurry did not overrate the strength of this position in a military point of view, since it would not be easy to attack it without exposing the assailants to the fire of the besieged. A good deal of art had also been manifested in the disposition of the timber of which the building was constructed and which afforded a protection much greater than was usual to the ordinary log-cabins of the frontier. The sides and ends were composed of the trunks of large pines, cut about nine feet long, and placed upright, instead of being laid horizontally, as was the practice of the country. These logs were squared on three sides, and had large tenons on each end. Massive sills were secured on the heads of the piles, with suitable grooves dug out of their upper surfaces, which had been squared for the purpose, and the lower tenons of the upright pieces were placed in these grooves, giving them secure fastening below. Plates had been laid on the upper ends of the upright logs, and were kept in their places by a similar contrivance; the several corners of the structure being well fastened by scarfing and pinning the sills and plates. The doors were made of smaller logs, similarly squared, and the roof was composed of light poles, firmly united, and well covered with bark.

The effect of this ingenious arrangement was to give its owner a house that could be approached only by water, the sides of which were composed of logs closely wedged together, which were two feet thick in their thinnest parts, and which could be separated only by a deliberate and laborious use of human hands, or by the slow operation of time. The outer surface of the building was rude and uneven, the logs being of unequal sizes; but the squared surfaces within gave both the sides and door as uniform an appearance as was desired, either for use or show. The chimney was not the least singular portion of the castle, as Hurry made his companion observe, while he explained the process by which it had been made. The material was a stiff clay, properly worked, which had been put together in a mould of sticks, and suffered to harden, a foot or two at a time, commencing at the bottom. When the entire chimney had thus been raised, and had been properly bound in with outward props, a brisk fire was kindled, and kept going until it was burned to something like a brick-red. This had not been an easy operation, nor had it succeeded entirely; but by dint of filling the cracks with fresh clay, a safe fireplace and chimney had been obtained in the end. This part of the work stood on the log-door, secured beneath by an extra pile. There were a few other peculiarities about this dwelling, which will better appear in the course of the narrative.

"Old Tom is full of contrivances," added Hurry, "and he set his heart on the success of his chimney, which threatened more than once to give out altogether; but perseverance will even overcome smoke; and now he has a comfortable cabin of it, though it did promise, at one time, to be a chinky sort of a flue to carry flames and fire."

"You seem to know the whole history of the castle, Hurry, chimney and sides," said Deerslayer, smiling; "is love so overcoming that it causes a man to study the story of his sweetheart's habitation?"

"Partly that, lad, and partly eyesight," returned the good-natured giant, laughing; "there was a large gang of us in the lake, the summer the old fellow built, and we helped him along with the job. I raised no small part of the weight of them uprights with my own shoulders, and the axes flew, I can inform you, Master Natty, while we were bee-ing it among the trees ashore. The old devil is no way stingy about food, and as we had often eat at his hearth, we thought we would just house him comfortably, afore we went to Albany with our skins. Yes, many is the meal I've swallowed in Tom Hutter's cabins; and Hetty, though so weak in the way of wits, has a wonderful particular way about a frying-pan or a gridiron!

"While the parties were thus discoursing, the canoe had been gradually drawing nearer to the 'castle,' and was now so close as to require but a single stroke of a paddle to reach the landing. This was at a floored platform in front of the entrance, that might have been some twenty feet square.

"Old Tom calls this sort of a wharf his door-yard," observed Hurry, as he fastened the canoe, after he and his Companion had left it: "and the gallants from the forts have named it the castle court though what a 'court' can have to do here is more than I can tell you, seeing that there is no law. 'Tis as I supposed; not a soul within, but the whole family is off on a v'y'ge of discovery!"

While Hurry was bustling about the "door-yard," examining the fishing-spears, rods, nets, and other similar appliances of a frontier cabin, Deerslayer, whose manner was altogether more rebuked and quiet, entered the building with a curiosity that was not usually exhibited by one so long trained in Indian habits. The interior of the "castle" was as faultlessly neat as its exterior was novel. The entire space, some twenty feet by forty, was subdivided into several small sleeping-rooms; the apartment into which he first entered, serving equally for the ordinary uses of its inmates, and for a kitchen. The furniture was of the strange mixture that it is not uncommon to find in the remotely situated log-tenements of the interior. Most of it was rude, and to the last degree rustic; but there was a clock, with a handsome case of dark wood, in a corner, and two or three chairs, with a table and bureau, that had evidently come from some dwelling of more than usual pretension. The clock was industriously ticking, but its leaden-looking hands did no discredit to their dull aspect, for they pointed to the hour of eleven, though the sun plainly showed it was some time past the turn of the day. There was also a dark, massive chest. The kitchen utensils were of the simplest kind, and far from numerous, but every article was in its place, and showed the nicest care in its condition.

After Deerslayer had cast a look about him in the outer room, he raised a wooden latch, and entered a narrow passage that divided the inner end of the house into two equal parts. Frontier usages being no way scrupulous, and his curiosity being strongly excited, the young man now opened a door, and found himself in a bedroom. A single glance sufficed to show that the apartment belonged to females. The bed was of the feathers of wild geese, and filled nearly to overflowing; but it lay in a rude bunk, raised only a foot from the door. On one side of it were arranged, on pegs, various dresses, of a quality much superior to what one would expect to meet in such a place, with ribbons and other similar articles to correspond. Pretty shoes, with handsome silver buckles, such as were then worn by females in easy circumstances, were not wanting; and no less than six fans, of gay colors, were placed half open, in a way to catch the eye by their conceits and hues. Even the pillow, on this side of the bed, was covered with finer linen than its companion, and it was ornamented with a small ruffle. A cap, coquettishly decorated with ribbons, hung above it, and a pair of long gloves, such as were rarely used in those days by persons of the laboring classes, were pinned ostentatiously to it, as if with an intention to exhibit them there, if they could not be shown on the owner's arms.

All this Deerslayer saw, and noted with a degree of minuteness that would have done credit to the habitual observation of his friends, the Delawares. Nor did he fail to perceive the distinction that existed between the appearances on the different sides of the bed, the head of which stood against the wall. On that opposite to the one just described, everything was homely and uninviting, except through its perfect neatness. The few garments that were hanging from the pegs were of the coarsest materials and of the commonest forms, while nothing seemed made for show. Of ribbons there was not one; nor was there either cap or kerchief beyond those which Hutter's daughters might be fairly entitled to wear.

It was now several years since Deerslayer had been in a spot especially devoted to the uses of females of his own color and race. The sight brought back to his mind a rush of childish recollections; and he lingered in the room with a tenderness of feeling to which he had long been a stranger. He bethought him of his mother, whose homely vestments he remembered to have seen hanging on pegs like those which he felt must belong to Hetty Hutter; and he bethought himself of a sister, whose incipient and native taste for finery had exhibited itself somewhat in the manner of that of Judith, though necessarily in a less degree. These little resemblances opened a long hidden vein of sensations; and as he quitted the room, it was with a saddened mien. He looked no further, but returned slowly and thoughtfully towards the "door-yard."

"If Old Tom has taken to a new calling, and has been trying his hand at the traps," cried Hurry, who had been coolly examining the borderer's implements; "if that is his humor, and you're disposed to remain in these parts, we can make an uncommon comfortable season of it; for, while the old man and I out-knowledge the beaver, you can fish, and knock down the deer, to keep body and soul together. I've always give the poorest hunters half a share, but one as actyve and sartain as yourself might expect a full one."

"Thank'ee, Hurry; thank'ee, with all my heart — but I do a little beavering for myself as occasions offer. 'Tis true, the Delawares call me Deerslayer, but it's not so much because I'm pretty fatal with the venison as because that while I kill so many bucks and does, I've never yet taken the life of a fellow-creatur'. They say their traditions do not tell of another who had shed so much blood of animals that had not shed the blood of man."

"I hope they don't account you chicken-hearted, lad! A faint-hearted man is like a no-tailed beaver."

"I don't believe, Hurry, that they account me as out-of-the-way timorsome, even though they may not account me as out-of-the-way brave. But I'm not quarrelsome; and that goes a great way towards keeping blood off the hands, among the hunters and red-skins; and then, Harry March, it keeps blood off the conscience, too."

"Well, for my part I account game, a red-skin, and a Frenchman as pretty much the same thing; though I'm as onquarrelsome a man, too, as there is in all the colonies. I despise a quarreller as I do a cur-dog; but one has no need to be over-scrupulous when it's the right time to show the flint."

"I look upon him as the most of a man who acts nearest the right, Hurry. But this is a glorious spot, and my eyes never a-weary looking at it!"

"'Tis your first acquaintance with a lake; and these ideas come over us all at such times. Lakes have a gentle character, as I say, being pretty much water and land, and points and bays."

As this definition by no means met the feelings that were uppermost in the mind of the young hunter, he made no immediate answer, but stood gazing at the dark hills and the glassy water in silent enjoyment.

"Have the Governor's or the King's people given this lake a name?" he suddenly asked, as if struck with a new idea. "If they've not begun to blaze their trees, and set up their compasses, and line off their maps, it's likely they've not bethought them to disturb natur' with a name."

"They've not got to that, yet; and the last time I went in with skins, one of the King's surveyors was questioning me consarning all the region hereabouts. He had heard that there was a lake in this quarter, and had got some general notions about it, such as that there was water and hills; but how much of either, he know'd no more than you know of the Mohawk tongue. I didn't open the trap any wider than was necessary, giving him but poor encouragement in the way of farms and clearings. In short, I left on his mind some such opinion of this country, as a man gets of a spring of dirty water, with a path to it that is so muddy that one mires afore he sets out. He told me they hadn't got the spot down yet on their maps, though I conclude that is a mistake, for he showed me his parchment, and there is a lake down on it, where there is no lake in fact, and which is about fifty miles from the place where it ought to be, if they meant it for this. I don't think my account will encourage him to mark down another, by way of improvement."

Here Hurry laughed heartily, such tricks being particularly grateful to a set of men who dreaded the approaches of civilization as a curtailment of their own lawless empire. The egregious errors that existed in the maps of the day, all of which were made in Europe, were, moreover, a standing topic of ridicule among them; for, if they had not science enough to make any better themselves, they had sufficient local information to detect the gross blunders contained in those that existed. Any one who will take the trouble to compare these unanswerable evidences of the topographical skill of our fathers a century since, with the more accurate sketches of our own time, will at once perceive that the men of the woods had a sufficient justification for all their criticism on this branch of the skill of the colonial governments, which did not at

all hesitate to place a river or a lake a degree or two out of the way, even though they lay within a day's march of the inhabited parts of the country.

"I'm glad it has no name," resumed Deerslayer, "or at least, no pale-face name; for their christenings always foretell waste and destruction. No doubt, howsoever, the red-skins have their modes of knowing it, and the hunters and trappers, too; they are likely to call the place by something reasonable and resembling."

"As for the tribes, each has its tongue, and its own way of calling things; and they treat this part of the world just as they treat all others. Among ourselves, we've got to calling the place the 'Glimmerglass,' seeing that its whole basin is so often hinged with pines, cast upward to its face as if it would throw back the hills that hang over it."

"There is an outlet, I know, for all lakes have outlets, and the rock at which I am to meet Chingachgook stands near an outlet. Has that no colony-name yet?"

"In that particular they've got the advantage of us, having one end, and that the biggest, in their own keeping: they've given it a name which has found its way up to its source; names nat'rally working up stream. No doubt, Deerslayer, you've seen the Susquehannah, down in the Delaware country?"

"That have I, and hunted along its banks a hundred times."

"That and this are the same in fact, and, I suppose, the same in sound. I am glad they've been compelled to keep the redmen's name, for it would be too hard to rob them of both land and name!"

Deerslayer made no answer; but he stood leaning on his rifle, gazing at the view which so much delighted him. The reader is not to suppose, however, that it was the picturesque alone which so strongly attracted his attention. The spot was very lovely, of a truth, and it was then seen in one of its most favorable moments, the surface of the lake being as smooth as glass and as limpid as pure air, throwing back the mountains, clothed in dark pines, along the whole of its eastern boundary, the points thrusting forward their trees even to nearly horizontal lines, while the bays were seen glittering through an occasional arch beneath, left by a vault fretted with branches and leaves. It was the air of deep repose — the solitudes, that spoke of scenes and forests untouched by the hands of man — the reign of nature, in a word, that gave so much pure delight to one of his habits and turn of mind. Still, he felt, though it was unconsciously, like a poet also. If he found a pleasure in studying this large, and to him unusual opening into the mysteries and forms of the woods, as one is gratified in getting broader views of any subject that has long occupied his thoughts, he was not insensible to the innate loveliness of such a landscape neither, but felt a portion of that soothing of the spirit which is a common attendant of a scene so thoroughly pervaded by the holy cairn of nature.



## CHAPTER 3

*"Come, shall we go and kill us venison?  
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled foals —  
Being native burghers of this desert city —  
Should, in their own confines, with forked heads  
Have their round haunches gored."*

—AS YOU LIKE IT, II.I.21–25

Hurry Harry thought more of the beauties of Judith Hutter than of those of the Glimmerglass and its accompanying scenery. As soon as he had taken a sufficiently intimate survey of floating Tom's implements, therefore, he summoned his companion to the canoe, that they might go down the lake in quest of the family. Previously to embarking, however, Hurry carefully examined the whole of the northern end of the water with an indifferent ship's glass, that formed a part of Hutter's effects. In this scrutiny, no part of the shore was overlooked; the bays and points in particular being subjected to a closer inquiry than the rest of the wooded boundary.

"Tis as I thought," said Hurry, laying aside the glass, "the old fellow is drifting about the south end this fine weather, and has left the castle to defend itself. Well, now we know that he is not up this-a-way, 'twill be but a small matter to paddle down and hunt him up in his hiding-place."

"Does Master Hutter think it necessary to burrow on this lake?" inquired Deerslayer, as he followed his companion into the canoe; "to my eye it is such a solitude as one might open his whole soul in, and fear no one to disarrange his thoughts or his worship."

"You forget your friends the Mingos, and all the French savages. Is there a spot on 'arth, Deerslayer, to which them disquiet rogues don't go? Where is the lake, or even the deer lick, that the blackguards don't find out, and having found out, don't, sooner or later, discolour its water with blood."

"I hear no good character of 'em, sartainly, friend Hurry, though I've never been called on, yet, to meet them, or any other mortal, on the warpath. I dare to say that such a lovely spot as this, would not be likely to be overlooked by such plunderers, for, though I've not been in the way of quarreling with them tribes myself, the Delawares give me such an account of 'em that I've pretty much set 'em down in my own mind, as thorough miscreants."

"You may do that with a safe conscience, or for that matter, any other savage you may happen to meet."

Here Deerslayer protested, and as they went paddling down the lake, a hot discussion was maintained concerning the respective merits of the pale-faces and the red-skins. Hurry had all the prejudices and antipathies of a white hunter, who generally regards the Indian as a sort of natural competitor, and not unfrequently as a natural enemy. As a matter of course, he was loud, clamorous, dogmatical and not very argumentative. Deerslayer, on the other hand, manifested a very different temper, proving by the moderation of his language, the fairness of his views, and the simplicity of his distinctions, that he possessed every disposition to hear reason, a strong, innate desire to do justice, and an ingenuousness that was singularly indisposed to have recourse to sophism to maintain an argument; or to defend a prejudice. Still he was not altogether free from the influence of the latter feeling. This tyrant of the human mind, which ruses on it prey through a thousand avenues, almost as soon as men begin to think and feel, and which seldom relinquishes its iron sway until they cease to do either, had made some impression on even the just propensities of this individual, who probably offered in these particulars, a fair specimen of what absence from bad example, the want of temptation to go wrong, and native good feeling can render youth.

"You will allow, Deerslayer, that a Mingo is more than half devil," cried Hurry, following up the discussion with an animation that touched closely on ferocity, "though you want to over-persuade me that the Delaware tribe is pretty much made up of angels. Now, I gainsay that proposal, consarning white men, even. All white men are not faultless, and therefore all Indians can't be faultless. And so your argument is out at the elbow in the start. But this is what I call reason. Here's three colors on 'arth: white, black, and red. White is the highest color, and therefore the best man; black comes next, and is put to live in the neighborhood of the white man, as tolerable, and fit to be made use of; and red comes last, which shows that those that made 'em never expected an Indian to be accounted as more than half human."

"God made all three alike, Hurry."

"Alike! Do you call a nigger like a white man, or me like an Indian?"



"You go off at half-cock, and don't hear me out. God made us all, white, black, and red; and, no doubt, had his own wise intentions in coloring us differently. Still, he made us, in the main, much the same in feelin's; though I'll not deny that he gave each race its gifts. A white man's gifts are Christianized, while a red-skin's are more for the wilderness. Thus, it would be a great offence for a white man to scalp the dead; whereas it's a signal virtue in an Indian. Then ag'in, a white man cannot amboosh women and children in war, while a red-skin may. 'Tis cruel work, I'll allow; but for them it's lawful work; while for us, it would be grievous work."

"That depends on your inimy. As for scalping, or even skinning a savage, I look upon them pretty much the same as cutting off the ears of wolves for the bounty, or stripping a bear of its hide. And then you're out significantly, as to taking the poll of a red-skin in hand, seeing that the very colony has offered a bounty for the job; all the same as it pays for wolves' ears and crows' heads."

"Ay, and a bad business it is, Hurry. Even the Indians themselves cry shame on it, seeing it's ag'in a white man's gifts. I do not pretend that all that white men do, is properly Christianized, and according to the lights given them, for then they would be what they ought to be; which we know they are not; but I will maintain that tradition, and use, and color, and laws, make such a difference in races as to amount to gifts. I do not deny that there are tribes among the Indians that are nat'rally perverse and wicked, as there are nations among the whites. Now, I account the Mingos as belonging to the first, and the Frenchers, in the Canadas, to the last. In a state of lawful warfare, such as we have lately got into, it is a duty to keep down all compassionate feelin's, so far as life goes, ag'in either; but when it comes to scalps, it's a very different matter."

"Just hearken to reason, if you please, Deerslayer, and tell me if the colony can make an unlawful law? Isn't an unlawful law more ag'in natur' than scalpin' a savage? A law can no more be unlawful, than truth can be a lie."

"That sounds reasonable; but it has a most onreasonable bearing, Hurry. Laws don't all come from the same quarter. God has given us his'n, and some come from the colony, and others come from the King and Parliament. When the colony's laws, or even the King's laws, run ag'in the laws of God, they get to be unlawful, and ought not to be obeyed. I hold to a white man's respecting white laws, so long as they do not cross the track of a law comin' from a higher authority; and for a red man to obey his own red-skin usages, under the same privilege. But, 't is useless talking, as each man will think fir himself, and have his say agreeable to his thoughts. Let us keep a good lookout for your friend Floating Tom, lest we pass him, as he lies hidden under this bushy shore."

Deerslayer had not named the borders of the lake amiss. Along their whole length, the smaller trees overhung the water, with their branches often dipping in the transparent element. The banks were steep, even from the narrow strand; and, as vegetation invariably struggles towards the light, the effect was precisely that at which the lover of the picturesque would have aimed, had the ordering of this glorious setting of forest been submitted to his control. The points and bays, too, were sufficiently numerous to render the outline broken and diversified. As the canoe kept close along the western side of the lake, with a view, as Hurry had explained to his companion, of reconnoitering for enemies, before he trusted himself too openly in sight, the expectations of the two adventurers were kept constantly on the stretch, as neither could foretell what the next turning of a point might reveal. Their progress was swift, the gigantic strength of Hurry enabling him to play with the light bark as if it had been a feather, while the skill of his companion almost equalized their usefulness, notwithstanding the disparity in natural means.

Each time the canoe passed a point, Hurry turned a look behind him, expecting to see the "ark" anchored, or beached in the bay. He was fated to be disappointed, however; and they had got within a mile of the southern end of the lake, or a distance of quite two leagues from the "castle," which was now hidden from view by half a dozen intervening projections of the land, when he suddenly ceased paddling, as if uncertain in what direction next to steer.

"It is possible that the old chap has dropped into the river," said Hurry, after looking carefully along the whole of the eastern shore, which was about a mile distant, and open to his scrutiny for more than half its length; "for he has taken to trapping considerable, of late, and, barring flood-wood, he might drop down it a mile or so; though he would have a most scratching time in getting back again!"

"Where is this outlet?" asked Deerslayer; "I see no opening in the banks or the trees, that looks as if it would let a river like the Susquehannah run through it."

"Ay, Deerslayer, rivers are like human mortals; having small beginnings, and ending with broad shoulders and wide

mouths. You don't see the outlet, because it passes atween high, steep banks; and the pines, and hemlocks and bass-woods hang over it, as a roof hangs over a house. If old Tom is not in the 'Rat's Cove,' he must have burrowed in the river; we'll look for him first in the cove, and then we'll cross to the outlet."

As they proceeded, Hurry explained that there was a shallow bay, formed by a long, low point, that had got the name of the "Rat's Cove," from the circumstance of its being a favorite haunt of the muskrat; and which offered so complete a cover for the "ark," that its owner was fond of lying in it, whenever he found it convenient.

"As a man never knows who may be his visitors, in this part of the country," continued Hurry, "it's a great advantage to get a good look at 'em afore they come too near. Now it's war, such caution is more than commonly useful, since a Canada man or a Mingo might get into his hut afore he invited 'em. But Hutter is a first-rate look-outer, and can pretty much scent danger, as a hound scents the deer."

"I should think the castle so open, that it would be sartain to draw inimies, if any happened to find the lake; a thing unlikely enough, I will allow, as it's off the trail of the forts and settlements."

"Why, Deerslayer, I've got to believe that a man meets with inimies easier than he meets with fri'nds. It's skearful to think for how many causes one gets to be your inimy, and for how few your fri'nd. Some take up the hatchet because you don't think just as they think; other some because you run ahead of 'em in the same idees; and I once know'd a vagabond that quarrelled with a fri'nd because he didn't think him handsome. Now, you're no monument in the way of beauty, yourself, Deerslayer, and yet you wouldn't be so onreasonable as to become my inimy for just saying so."

"I'm as the Lord made me; and I wish to be accounted no better, nor any worse. Good looks I may not have; that is to say, to a degree that the light-minded and vain crave; but I hope I'm not altogether without some ricommend in the way of good conduct. There's few nobler looking men to be seen than yourself, Hurry; and I know that I am not to expect any to turn their eyes on me, when such a one as you can be gazed on; but I do not know that a hunter is less expart with the rifle, or less to be relied on for food, because he doesn't wish to stop at every shining spring he may meet, to study his own countenance in the water."

Here Hurry burst into a fit of loud laughter; for while he was too reckless to care much about his own manifest physical superiority, he was well aware of it, and, like most men who derive an advantage from the accidents of birth or nature, he was apt to think complacently on the subject, whenever it happened to cross his mind.

"No, no, Deerslayer, you're no beauty, as you will own yourself, if you'll look over the side of the canoe," he cried; "Jude will say that to your face, if you start her, for a parter tongue isn't to be found in any gal's head, in or out of the settlements, if you provoke her to use it. My advice to you is, never to aggravate Judith; though you may tell anything to Hetty, and she'll take it as meek as a lamb. No, Jude will be just as like as not to tell you her opinion consarning your looks."

"And if she does, Hurry, she will tell me no more than you have said already."

"You're not thick'ning up about a small remark, I hope, Deerslayer, when no harm is meant. You are not a beauty, as you must know, and why shouldn't fri'nds tell each other these little trifles? If you was handsome, or ever like to be, I'd be one of the first to tell you of it; and that ought to content you. Now, if Jude was to tell me that I'm as ugly as a sinner, I'd take it as a sort of obligation, and try not to believe her."

"It's easy for them that natur' has favored, to jest about such matters, Hurry, though it is sometimes hard for others. I'll not deny but I've had my cravings towards good looks; yes, I have; but then I've always been able to get them down by considering how many I've known with fair outsides, who have had nothing to boast of inwardly. I'll not deny, Hurry, that I often wish I'd been created more comely to the eye, and more like such a one as yourself in them particulars; but then I get the feelin' under by remembering how much better off I am, in a great many respects, than some fellow-mortals. I might have been born lame, and onfit even for a squirrel-hunt, or blind, which would have made me a burden on myself as well as on my fri'nds; or without hearing, which would have totally onqualified me for ever campaigning or scouting; which I look forward to as part of a man's duty in troublesome times. Yes, yes; it's not pleasant, I will allow, to see them that's more comely, and more sought a'ter, and honored than yourself; but it may all be borne, if a man looks the evil in the face, and don't mistake his gifts and his obligations."

Hurry, in the main, was a good-hearted as well as good-natured fellow; and the self-abasement of his companion completely got the better of the passing feeling of personal vanity. He regretted the allusion he had made to the other's

appearance, and endeavored to express as much, though it was done in the uncouth manner that belonged to the habits and opinions of the frontier.

"I meant no harm, Deerslayer," he answered, in a deprecating manner, "and hope you'll forget what I've said. If you're not downright handsome, you've a sartain look that says, plainer than any words, that all's right within. Then you set no value by looks, and will the sooner forgive any little slight to your appearance. I will not say that Jude will greatly admire you, for that might raise hopes that would only breed disapp'intment; but there's Hetty, now, would be just as likely to find satisfaction in looking at you, as in looking at any other man. Then you're altogether too grave and considerate-like, to care much about Judith; for, though the gal is oncommon, she is so general in her admiration, that a man need not be exalted because she happens to smile. I sometimes think the hussy loves herself better than she does anything else breathin'."

"If she did, Hurry, she'd do no more, I'm afeard, than most queens on their thrones, and ladies in the towns," answered Deerslayer, smiling, and turning back towards his companion with every trace of feeling banished from his honest-looking and frank countenance. "I never yet know'd even a Delaware of whom you might not say that much. But here is the end of the long p'int you mentioned, and the 'Rat's Cove' can't be far off."

This point, instead of thrusting itself forward, like all the others, ran in a line with the main shore of the lake, which here swept within it, in a deep and retired bay, circling round south again, at the distance of a quarter of a mile, and crossed the valley, forming the southern termination of the water. In this bay Hurry felt almost certain of finding the ark, since, anchored behind the trees that covered the narrow strip of the point, it might have lain concealed from prying eyes an entire summer. So complete, indeed, was the cover, in this spot, that a boat hauled close to the beach, within the point, and near the bottom of the bay, could by any possibility be seen from only one direction; and that was from a densely wooded shore within the sweep of the water, where strangers would be little apt to go.

"We shall soon see the ark," said Hurry, as the canoe glided round the extremity of the point, where the water was so deep as actually to appear black; "he loves to burrow up among the rushes, and we shall be in his nest in five minutes, although the old fellow may be off among the traps himself."

March proved a false prophet. The canoe completely doubled the point, so as to enable the two travellers to command a view of the whole cove or bay, for it was more properly the last, and no object, but those that nature had placed there, became visible. The placid water swept round in a graceful curve, the rushes bent gently towards its surface, and the trees overhung it as usual; but all lay in the soothing and sublime solitude of a wilderness. The scene was such as a poet or an artist would have delighted in, but it had no charm for Hurry Harry, who was burning with impatience to get a sight of his light-minded beauty.

The motion of the canoe had been attended with little or no noise, the frontiersmen habitually getting accustomed to caution in most of their movements, and it now lay on the glassy water appearing to float in air, partaking of the breathing stillness that seemed to pervade the entire scene. At this instant a dry stick was heard cracking on the narrow strip of land that concealed the bay from the open lake. Both the adventurers started, and each extended a hand towards his rifle, the weapon never being out of reach of the arm.

"'Twas too heavy for any light creatur'," whispered Hurry, "and it sounded like the tread of a man!"

"Not so — not so," returned Deerslayer; "'t was, as you say, too heavy for one, but it was too light for the other. Put your paddle in the water, and send the canoe in, to that log; I'll land and cut off the creatur's retreat up the p'int, be it a Mingo, or be it a muskrat."

As Hurry complied, Deerslayer was soon on the shore, advancing into the thicket with a moccasined foot, and a caution that prevented the least noise. In a minute he was in the centre of the narrow strip of land, and moving slowly down towards its end, the bushes rendering extreme watchfulness necessary. Just as he reached the centre of the thicket the dried twigs cracked again, and the noise was repeated at short intervals, as if some creature having life walked slowly towards the point. Hurry heard these sounds also, and pushing the canoe off into the bay, he seized his rifle to watch the result. A breathless minute succeeded, after which a noble buck walked out of the thicket, proceeded with a stately step to the sandy extremity of the point, and began to slake his thirst from the water of the lake. Hurry hesitated an instant; then raising his rifle hastily to his shoulder, he took sight and fired. The effect of this sudden interruption of the solemn stillness of such a scene was not its least striking peculiarity. The report of the weapon had the usual sharp, short sound of the rifle: but when a few moments of silence had succeeded the sudden crack, during which the noise was floating in air across the

water, it reached the rocks of the opposite mountain, where the vibrations accumulated, and were rolled from cavity to cavity for miles along the hills, seeming to awaken the sleeping thunders of the woods. The buck merely shook his head at the report of the rifle and the whistling of the bullet, for never before had he come in contact with man; but the echoes of the hills awakened his distrust, and leaping forward, with his four legs drawn under his body, he fell at once into deep water, and began to swim towards the foot of the lake. Hurry shouted and dashed forward in chase, and for one or two minutes the water foamed around the pursuer and the pursued. The former was dashing past the point, when Deerslayer appeared on the sand and signed to him to return.

"'Twas inconsiderate to pull a trigger, afore we had reconn'itred the shore, and made sartain that no inimies harbored near it," said the latter, as his companion slowly and reluctantly complied. "This much I have l'arned from the Delawares, in the way of schooling and traditions, even though I've never yet been on a war-path. And, moreover, venison can hardly be called in season now, and we do not want for food. They call me Deerslayer, I'll own, and perhaps I deserve the name, in the way of understanding the creatur's habits, as well as for some sartainty in the aim, but they can't accuse me of killing an animal when there is no occasion for the meat, or the skin. I may be a slayer, it's true, but I'm no slaughterer."

"'Twas an awful mistake to miss that buck!" exclaimed Hurry, doffing his cap and running his fingers through his handsome but matted curls, as if he would loosen his tangled ideas by the process. "I've not done so onhandy a thing since I was fifteen."

"Never lament it, as the creatur's death could have done neither of us any good, and might have done us harm. Them echoes are more awful in my ears, than your mistake, Hurry, for they sound like the voice of natur' calling out ag'in a wasteful and onthinking action."

"You'll hear plenty of such calls, if you tarry long in this quarter of the world, lad," returned the other laughing. "The echoes repeat pretty much all that is said or done on the Glimmerglass, in this calm summer weather. If a paddle falls you hear of it sometimes, ag'in and ag'in, as if the hills were mocking your clumsiness, and a laugh, or a whistle, comes out of them pines, when they're in the humour to speak, in a way to make you believe they can r'ally converse."

"So much the more reason for being prudent and silent. I do not think the inimy can have found their way into these hills yet, for I don't know what they are to gain by it, but all the Delawares tell me that, as courage is a warrior's first virtue, so is prudence his second. One such call from the mountains, is enough to let a whole tribe into the secret of our arrival."

"If it does no other good, it will warn old Tom to put the pot over, and let him know visiters are at hand. Come, lad; get into the canoe, and we will hunt the ark up, while there is yet day."

Deerslayer complied, and the canoe left the spot. Its head was turned diagonally across the lake, pointing towards the south-eastern curvature of the sheet. In that direction, the distance to the shore, or to the termination of the lake, on the course the two were now steering, was not quite a mile, and, their progress being always swift, it was fast lessening under the skilful, but easy sweeps of the paddles. When about half way across, a slight noise drew the eyes of the men towards the nearest land, and they saw that the buck was just emerging from the lake and wading towards the beach. In a minute, the noble animal shook the water from his flanks, gazed up ward at the covering of trees, and, bounding against the bank, plunged into the forest.

"That creatur' goes off with gratitude in his heart," said Deerslayer, "for natur' tells him he has escaped a great danger. You ought to have some of the same feelin's, Hurry, to think your eye wasn't true, or that your hand was onsteady, when no good could come of a shot that was intended onmeaningly rather than in reason."

"I deny the eye and the hand," cried March with some heat. "You've got a little character, down among the Delawares, there, for quickness and sartainty, at a deer, but I should like to see you behind one of them pines, and a full painted Mingo behind another, each with a cock'd rifle and a striving for the chance! Them's the situations, Nathaniel, to try the sight and the hand, for they begin with trying the narves. I never look upon killing a creatur' as an explite; but killing a savage is. The time will come to try your hand, now we've got to blows ag'in, and we shall soon know what a ven'son reputation can do in the field. I deny that either hand or eye was onsteady; it was all a miscalculation of the buck, which stood still when he ought to have kept in motion, and so I shot ahead of him."

"Have it your own way, Hurry; all I contend for is, that it's lucky. I dare say I shall not pull upon a human mortal as steadily or with as light a heart, as I pull upon a deer."

"Who's talking of mortals, or of human beings at all, Deerslayer? I put the matter to you on the supposition of an Injin."

I dare say any man would have his feelin's when it got to be life or death, ag'in another human mortal; but there would be no such scruples in regard to an Injin; nothing but the chance of his hitting you, or the chance of your hitting him."

"I look upon the redmen to be quite as human as we are ourselves, Hurry. They have their gifts, and their religion, it's true; but that makes no difference in the end, when each will be judged according to his deeds, and not according to his skin."

"That's downright missionary, and will find little favor up in this part of the country, where the Moravians don't congregate. Now, skin makes the man. This is reason; else how are people to judge of each other. The skin is put on, over all, in order when a creatur', or a mortal, is fairly seen, you may know at once what to make of him. You know a bear from a hog, by his skin, and a gray squirrel from a black."

"True, Hurry," said the other looking back and smiling, "nevertheless, they are both squirrels."

"Who denies it? But you'll not say that a red man and a white man are both Injins?"

"But I do say they are both men. Men of different races and colors, and having different gifts and traditions, but, in the main, with the same natur'. Both have souls; and both will be held accountable for their deeds in this life."

Hurry was one of those theorists who believed in the inferiority of all the human race who were not white. His notions on the subject were not very clear, nor were his definitions at all well settled; but his opinions were none the less dogmatical or fierce. His conscience accused him of sundry lawless acts against the Indians, and he had found it an exceedingly easy mode of quieting it, by putting the whole family of redmen, incontinently, without the category of human rights. Nothing angered him sooner than to deny his proposition, more especially if the denial were accompanied by a show of plausible argument; and he did not listen to his companion's remarks with much composure of either manner or feeling.

"You're a boy, Deerslayer, misled and misconsaited by Delaware arts, and missionary ignorance," he exclaimed, with his usual indifference to the forms of speech, when excited. "You may account yourself as a red-skin's brother, but I hold'em all to be animals; with nothing human about 'em but cunning. That they have, I'll allow; but so has a fox, or even a bear. I'm older than you, and have lived longer in the woods — or, for that matter, have lived always there, and am not to be told what an Injin is or what he is not. If you wish to be considered a savage, you've only to say so, and I'll name you as such to Judith and the old man, and then we'll see how you'll like your welcome."

Here Hurry's imagination did his temper some service, since, by conjuring up the reception his semi-aquatic acquaintance would be likely to bestow on one thus introduced, he burst into a hearty fit of laughter. Deerslayer too well knew the uselessness of attempting to convince such a being of anything against his prejudices, to feel a desire to undertake the task; and he was not sorry that the approach of the canoe to the southeastern curve of the lake gave a new direction to his ideas. They were now, indeed, quite near the place that March had pointed out for the position of the outlet, and both began to look for it with, a curiosity that was increased by the expectation of the ark.

It may strike the reader as a little singular, that the place where a stream of any size passed through banks that had an elevation of some twenty feet, should be a matter of doubt with men who could not now have been more than two hundred yards distant from the precise spot. It will be recollected, however, that the trees and bushes here, as elsewhere, fairly overhung the water, making such a fringe to the lake, as to conceal any little variations from its general outline.

"I've not been down at this end of the lake these two summers," said Hurry, standing up in the canoe, the better to look about him. "Ay, there's the rock, showing its chin above the water, and I know that the river begins in its neighborhood."

The men now plied the paddles again, and they were presently within a few yards of the rock, floating towards it, though their efforts were suspended. This rock was not large, being merely some five or six feet high, only half of which elevation rose above the lake. The incessant washing of the water for centuries had so rounded its summit, that it resembled a large beehive in shape, its form being more than usually regular and even. Hurry remarked, as they floated slowly past, that this rock was well known to all the Indians in that part of the country, and that they were in the practice of using it as a mark to designate the place of meeting, when separated by their hunts and marches.

"And here is the river, Deerslayer," he continued, "though so shut in by trees and bushes as to look more like an and-bush, than the outlet of such a sheet as the Glimmerglass."

Hurry had not badly described the place, which did truly seem to be a stream lying in ambush. The high banks might have been a hundred feet asunder; but, on the western side, a small bit of low land extended so far forward as to diminish

the breadth of the stream to half that width.

As the bushes hung in the water beneath, and pines that had the stature of church-steeple rose in tall columns above, all inclining towards the light, until their branches intermingled, the eye, at a little distance, could not easily detect any opening in the shore, to mark the egress of the water. In the forest above, no traces of this outlet were to be seen from the lake, the whole presenting the same connected and seemingly interminable carpet of leaves. As the canoe slowly advanced, sucked in by the current, it entered beneath an arch of trees, through which the light from the heavens struggled by casual openings, faintly relieving the gloom beneath.

"This is a nat'ral and-bush," half whispered Hurry, as if he felt that the place was devoted to secrecy and watchfulness; "depend on it, old Tom has burrowed with the ark somewhere in this quarter. We will drop down with the current a short distance, and ferret him out."

"This seems no place for a vessel of any size," returned the other; "it appears to me that we shall have hardly room enough for the canoe."

Hurry laughed at the suggestion, and, as it soon appeared, with reason; for the fringe of bushes immediately on the shore of the lake was no sooner passed, than the adventurers found themselves in a narrow stream, of a sufficient depth of limpid water, with a strong current, and a canopy of leaves upheld by arches composed of the limbs of hoary trees. Bushes lined the shores, as usual, but they left sufficient space between them to admit the passage of anything that did not exceed twenty feet in width, and to allow of a perspective ahead of eight or ten times that distance.

Neither of our two adventurers used his paddle, except to keep the light bark in the centre of the current, but both watched each turning of the stream, of which there were two or three within the first hundred yards, with jealous vigilance. Turn after turn, however, was passed, and the canoe had dropped down with the current some little distance, when Hurry caught a bush, and arrested its movement so suddenly and silently as to denote some unusual motive for the act. Deerslayer laid his hand on the stock of his rifle as soon as he noted this proceeding, but it was quite as much with a hunter's habit as from any feeling of alarm.

"There the old fellow is!" whispered Hurry, pointing with a finger, and laughing heartily, though he carefully avoided making a noise, "ratting it away, just as I supposed; up to his knees in the mud and water, looking to the traps and the bait. But for the life of me I can see nothing of the ark; though I'll bet every skin I take this season, Jude isn't trusting her pretty little feet in the neighborhood of that black mud. The gal's more likely to be braiding her hair by the side of some spring, where she can see her own good looks, and collect scornful feelings ag'in us men."

"You over-judge young women — yes, you do, Hurry — who as often bethink them of their failings as they do of their perfections. I dare to say this Judith, now, is no such admirer of herself, and no such scorner of our sex as you seem to think; and that she is quite as likely to be sarving her father in the house, wherever that may be, as he is to be sarving her among the traps."

"It's a pleasure to hear truth from a man's tongue, if it be only once in a girl's life," cried a pleasant, rich, and yet soft female voice, so near the canoe as to make both the listeners start. "As for you, Master Hurry, fair words are so apt to choke you, that I no longer expect to hear them from your mouth; the last you uttered sticking in your throat, and coming near to death. But I'm glad to see you keep better society than formerly, and that they who know how to esteem and treat women are not ashamed to journey in your company."

As this was said, a singularly handsome and youthful female face was thrust through an opening in the leaves, within reach of Deerslayer's paddle. Its owner smiled graciously on the young man; and the frown that she cast on Hurry, though simulated and pettish, had the effect to render her beauty more striking, by exhibiting the play of an expressive but capricious countenance; one that seemed to change from the soft to the severe, the mirthful to the reproving, with facility and indifference.

A second look explained the nature of the surprise. Unwittingly, the men had dropped alongside of the ark, which had been purposely concealed in bushes cut and arranged for the purpose; and Judith Hutter had merely pushed aside the leaves that lay before a window, in order to show her face, and speak to them.



## CHAPTER 4

*"And that timid fawn starts not with fear,  
When I steal to her secret bower;  
And that young May violet to me is dear,  
And I visit the silent streamlet near,  
To look on the lovely flower."*

—BRYANT, "AN INDIAN STORY," ll.11–15

The ark, as the floating habitation of the Hutter was generally called, was a very simple contrivance. A large flat, or scow, composed the buoyant part of the vessel; and in its centre, occupying the whole of its breadth, and about two thirds of its length, stood a low fabric, resembling the castle in construction, though made of materials so light as barely to be bullet-proof. As the sides of the scow were a little higher than usual, and the interior of the cabin had no more elevation than was necessary for comfort, this unusual addition had neither a very clumsy nor a very obtrusive appearance. It was, in short, little more than a modern canal-boat, though more rudely constructed, of greater breadth than common, and bearing about it the signs of the wilderness, in its bark-covered posts and roof. The scow, however, had been put together with some skill, being comparatively light, for its strength, and sufficiently manageable. The cabin was divided into two apartments, one of which served for a parlor, and the sleeping-room of the father, and the other was appropriated to the uses of the daughters. A very simple arrangement sufficed for the kitchen, which was in one end of the scow, and removed from the cabin, standing in the open air; the ark being altogether a summer habitation.

The "and-bush," as Hurry in his ignorance of English termed it, is quite as easily explained. In many parts of the lake and river, where the banks were steep and high, the smaller trees and larger bushes, as has been already mentioned, fairly overhung the stream, their branches not unfrequently dipping into the water. In some instances they grew out in nearly horizontal lines, for thirty or forty feet. The water being uniformly deepest near the shores, where the banks were highest and the nearest to a perpendicular, Hutter had found no difficulty in letting the ark drop under one of these covers, where it had been anchored with a view to conceal its position; security requiring some such precautions, in his view of the case. Once beneath the trees and bushes, a few stones fastened to the ends of the branches had caused them to bend sufficiently to dip into the river; and a few severed bushes, properly disposed, did the rest. The reader has seen that this cover was so complete as to deceive two men accustomed to the woods, and who were actually in search of those it concealed; a circumstance that will be easily understood by those who are familiar with the matted and wild luxuriance of a virgin American forest, more especially in a rich soil. The discovery of the ark produced very different effects on our two adventurers.

As soon as the canoe could be got round to the proper opening, Hurry leaped on board, and in a minute was closely engaged in a gay, and a sort of recriminating discourse with Judith, apparently forgetful of the existence of all the rest of the world. Not so with Deerslayer. He entered the ark with a slow, cautious step, examining every arrangement of the cover with curious and scrutinizing eyes. It is true, he cast one admiring glance at Judith, which was extorted by her brilliant and singular beauty; but even this could detain him but a single instant from the indulgence of his interest in Hutter's contrivances. Step by step did he look into the construction of the singular abode, investigate its fastenings and strength, ascertain its means of defence, and make every inquiry that would be likely to occur to one whose thoughts dwelt principally on such expedients. Nor was the cover neglected. Of this he examined the whole minutely, his commendation escaping him more than once in audible comments. Frontier usages admitting of this familiarity, he passed through the rooms, as he had previously done at the 'Castle', and opening a door issued into the end of the scow opposite to that where he had left Hurry and Judith. Here he found the other sister, employed at some coarse needle-work, seated beneath the leafy canopy of the cover.

As Deerslayer's examination was by this time ended, he dropped the butt of his rifle, and, leaning on the barrel with both hands, he turned towards the girl with an interest the singular beauty of her sister had not awakened. He had gathered from Hurry's remarks that Hetty was considered to have less intellect than ordinarily falls to the share of human beings, and his education among Indians had taught him to treat those who were thus afflicted by Providence with more than common tenderness. Nor was there any thing in Hetty Hutter's appearance, as so often happens, to weaken the interest her situation excited. An idiot she could not properly be termed, her mind being just enough enfeebled to lose

most of those traits that are connected with the more artful qualities, and to retain its ingenuousness and love of truth. It had often been remarked of this girl, by the few who had seen her, and who possessed sufficient knowledge to discriminate, that her perception of the right seemed almost intuitive, while her aversion to the wrong formed so distinctive a feature of her mind, as to surround her with an atmosphere of pure morality; peculiarities that are not infrequent with persons who are termed feeble-minded; as if God had forbidden the evil spirits to invade a precinct so defenceless, with the benign purpose of extending a direct protection to those who had been left without the usual aids of humanity. Her person, too, was agreeable, having a strong resemblance to that of her sister's, of which it was a subdued and humble copy. If it had none of the brilliancy of Judith's, the calm, quiet, almost holy expression of her meek countenance seldom failed to win on the observer, and few noted it long that did not begin to feel a deep and lasting interest in the girl. She had no colour, in common, nor was her simple mind apt to present images that caused her cheek to brighten, though she retained a modesty so innate that it almost raised her to the unsuspecting purity of a being superior to human infirmities. Guileless, innocent, and without distrust, equally by nature and from her mode of life, providence had, nevertheless shielded her from harm, by a halo of moral light, as it is said 'to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.'

"You are Hetty Hutter," said Deerslayer, in the way one puts a question unconsciously to himself, assuming a kindness of tone and manner that were singularly adapted to win the confidence of her he addressed. "Hurry Harry has told me of you, and I know you must be the child?"

"Yes, I'm Hetty Hutter" returned the girl in a low, sweet voice, which nature, aided by some education, had preserved from vulgarity of tone and utterance—"I'm Hetty; Judith Hutter's sister; and Thomas Hutter's youngest daughter."

"I know your history, then, for Hurry Harry talks considerable, and he is free of speech when he can find other people's consarns to dwell on. You pass most of your life on the lake, Hetty."

"Certainly. Mother is dead; father is gone a-trapping, and Judith and I stay at home. What's your name?"

"That's a question more easily asked than it is answered, young woman, seeing that I'm so young, and yet have borne more names than some of the greatest chiefs in all America."

"But you've got a name — you don't throw away one name, before you come honestly by another?"

"I hope not, gal — I hope not. My names have come nat'rally, and I suppose the one I bear now will be of no great lasting, since the Delawares seldom settle on a man's ra'al title, until such time as he has an opportunity of showing his true natur', in the council, or on the warpath; which has never behappened me; seeing firstly, because I'm not born a red-skin and have no right to sit in their councillings, and am much too humble to be called on for opinions from the great of my own colour; and, secondly, because this is the first war that has befallen in my time, and no inimy has yet inroaded far enough into the colony, to be reached by an arm even longer than mine."

"Tell me your names," added Hetty, looking up at him artlessly, "and, maybe, I'll tell you your character."

"There is some truth in that, I'll not deny, though it often fails. Men are deceived in other men's characters, and frequently give 'em names they by no means deserve. You can see the truth of this in the Mingo names, which, in their own tongue, signify the same things as the Delaware names — at least, so they tell me, for I know little of that tribe, unless it be by report — and no one can say they are as honest or as upright a nation. I put no great dependence, therefore, on names."

"Tell me all your names," repeated the girl, earnestly, for her mind was too simple to separate things from professions, and she did attach importance to a name; "I want to know what to think of you."

"Well, sartain; I've no objection, and you shall hear them all. In the first place, then, I'm Christian, and white-born, like yourself, and my parents had a name that came down from father to son, as is a part of their gifts. My father was called Bumpo; and I was named after him, of course, the given name being Nathaniel, or Natty, as most people saw fit to tarm it."

"Yes, yes — Natty — and Hetty" interrupted the girl quickly, and looking up from her work again, with a smile: "you are Natty, and I'm Hetty-though you are Bumpo, and I'm Hutter. Bumpo isn't as pretty as Hutter, is it?"

"Why, that's as people fancy. Bumpo has no lofty sound, I admit; and yet men have bumped through the world with it. I did not go by this name, howsoever, very long; for the Delawares soon found out, or thought they found out, that I was not given to lying, and they called me, firstly, 'Straight-tongue.'"

"That's a good name," interrupted Hetty, earnestly, and in a positive manner; "don't tell me there's no virtue in names!"



"I do not say that, for perhaps I deserved to be so called, lies being no favorites with me, as they are with some. After a while they found out I was quick of foot, and then they called me 'The Pigeon'; which, you know, has a swift wing, and flies in a straight line."

"That was a pretty name!" exclaimed Hetty; "pigeons are pretty birds!"

"Most things that God created are pretty in their way, my good gal, though they get to be deformed by mankind, so as to change their natur's, as well as their appearance. From carrying messages, and striking blind trails, I got at last to following the hunters, when it was thought I was quicker and surer at finding the game than most lads, and then they called me the 'Lap-ear'; as, they said, I partook of the sagacity of the hound."

"That's not so pretty," answered Hetty; "I hope you didn't keep that name long."

"Not after I was rich enough to buy a rifle," returned the other, betraying a little pride through his usually quiet and subdued manner; "then it was seen I could keep a wigwam in ven'son; and in time I got the name of 'Deerslayer,' which is that I now bear; homely as some will think it, who set more value on the scalp of a fellow-mortal than on the horns of a buck."

"Well, Deerslayer, I'm not one of them," answered Hetty, simply; "Judith likes soldiers, and flary coats, and fine feathers; but they're all naught to me. She says the officers are great, and gay, and of soft speech; but they make me shudder, for their business is to kill their fellow-creatures. I like your calling better; and your last name is a very good one — better than Natty Bumppo."

"This is nat'ral in one of your turn of mind, Hetty, and much as I should have expected. They tell me your sister is handsome — uncommon, for a mortal; and beauty is apt to seek admiration."

"Did you never see Judith?" demanded the girl, with quick earnestness; "if you never have, go at once and look at her. Even Hurry Harry isn't more pleasant to look at though she is a woman, and he is a man."

Deerslayer regarded the girl for a moment with concern. Her pale-face had flushed a little, and her eye, usually so mild and serene, brightened as she spoke, in the way to betray the inward impulses.

"Ay, Hurry Harry," he muttered to himself, as he walked through the cabin towards the other end of the boat; "this comes of good looks, if a light tongue has had no consarn in it. It's easy to see which way that poor creatur's feelin's are leanin', whatever may be the case with your Jude's."

But an interruption was put to the gallantry of Hurry, the coquetry of his intros, the thoughts of Deerslayer, and the gentle feelings of Hetty, by the sudden appearance of the canoe of the ark's owner, in the narrow opening among the bushes that served as a sort of moat to his position. It would seem that Hutter, or Floating Tom, as he was familiarly called by all the hunters who knew his habits, recognized the canoe of Hurry, for he expressed no surprise at finding him in the scow. On the contrary, his reception was such as to denote not only gratification, but a pleasure, mingled with a little disappointment at his not having made his appearance some days sooner.

"I looked for you last week," he said, in a half-grumbling, half-welcoming manner; "and was disappointed uncommonly that you didn't arrive. There came a runner through, to warn all the trappers and hunters that the colony and the Canadas were again in trouble; and I felt lonesome, up in these mountains, with three scalps to see to, and only one pair of hands to protect them."

"That's reasonable," returned March; "and 't was feeling like a parent. No doubt, if I had two such darters as Judith and Hetty, my exper'ence would tell the same story, though in gin'ral I am just as well satisfied with having the nearest neighbor fifty miles off, as when he is within call."

"Notwithstanding, you didn't choose to come into the wilderness alone, now you knew that the Canada savages are likely to be stirring," returned Hutter, giving a sort of distrustful, and at the same time inquiring glance at Deerslayer.

"Why should I? They say a bad companion, on a journey, helps to shorten the path; and this young man I account to be a reasonably good one. This is Deerslayer, old Tom, a noted hunter among the Delawares, and Christian-born, and Christian-edicated, too, like you and me. The lad is not perfect, perhaps, but there's worse men in the country that he came from, and it's likely he'll find some that's no better, in this part of the world. Should we have occasion to defend our traps, and the territory, he'll be useful in feeding us all; for he's a reg'lar dealer in ven'son."

"Young man, you are welcome," growled Tom, thrusting a hard, bony hand towards the youth, as a pledge of his sincerity; "in such times, a white face is a friend's, and I count on you as a support. Children sometimes make a stout heart

feeble, and these two daughters of mine give me more concern than all my traps, and skins, and rights in the country."

"That's nat'ral!" cried Hurry. "Yes, Deerslayer, you and I don't know it yet by experience; but, on the whole, I consider that as nat'ral. If we had darters, it's more than probable we should have some such feelin's; and I honor the man that owns 'em. As for Judith, old man, I enlist, at once, as her soldier, and here is Deerslayer to help you to take care of Hetty."

"Many thanks to you, Master March," returned the beauty, in a full, rich voice, and with an accuracy of intonation and utterance that she shared in common with her sister, and which showed that she had been better taught than her father's life and appearance would give reason to expect. "Many thanks to you; but Judith Hutter has the spirit and the experience that will make her depend more on herself than on good-looking rovers like you. Should there be need to face the savages, do you land with my father, instead of burrowing in the huts, under the show of defending us females and—"

"Girl — girl," interrupted the father, "quiet that glib tongue of thine, and hear the truth. There are savages on the lake shore already, and no man can say how near to us they may be at this very moment, or when we may hear more from them!"

"If this be true, Master Hutter," said Hurry, whose change of countenance denoted how serious he deemed the information, though it did not denote any unmanly alarm, "if this be true, your ark is in a most misfortunate position, for, though the cover did deceive Deerslayer and myself, it would hardly be overlooked by a full-blooded Injin, who was out seriously in s'arch of scalps!"

"I think as you do, Hurry, and wish, with all my heart, we lay anywhere else, at this moment, than in this narrow, crooked stream, which has many advantages to hide in, but which is almost fatal to them that are discovered. The savages are near us, moreover, and the difficulty is, to get out of the river without being shot down like deer standing at a lick!"

"Are you sartain, Master Hutter, that the red-skins you dread are ra'al Canadas?" asked Deerslayer, in a modest but earnest manner. "Have you seen any, and can you describe their paint?"

"I have fallen in with the signs of their being in the neighborhood, but have seen none of 'em. I was down stream a mile or so, looking to my traps, when I struck a fresh trail, crossing the corner of a swamp, and moving northward. The man had not passed an hour; and I know'd it for an Indian footstep, by the size of the foot, and the intoe, even before I found a worn moccasin, which its owner had dropped as useless. For that matter, I found the spot where he halted to make a new one, which was only a few yards from the place where he had dropped the old one."

"That doesn't look much like a red-skin on the war path!" returned the other, shaking his head. "An exper'enced warrior, at least, would have burned, or buried, or sunk in the river such signs of his passage; and your trail is, quite likely, a peaceable trail. But the moccasin may greatly relieve my mind, if you bethought you of bringing it off. I've come here to meet a young chief myself; and his course would be much in the direction you've mentioned. The trail may have been his'n."

"Hurry Harry, you're well acquainted with this young man, I hope, who has meetings with savages in a part of the country where he has never been before?" demanded Hutter, in a tone and in a manner that sufficiently indicated the motive of the question; these rude beings seldom hesitating, on the score of delicacy, to betray their feelings. "Treachery is an Indian virtue; and the whites, that live much in their tribes, soon catch their ways and practices."

"True — true as the Gospel, old Tom; but not personable to Deerslayer, who's a young man of truth, if he has no other ricommend. I'll answer for his honesty, whatever I may do for his valor in battle."

"I should like to know his errand in this strange quarter of the country."

"That is soon told, Master Hutter," said the young man, with the composure of one who kept a clean conscience. "I think, moreover, you've a right to ask it. The father of two such darters, who occupies a lake, after your fashion, has just the same right to inquire into a stranger's business in his neighborhood, as the colony would have to demand the reason why the Frenchers put more rijiments than common along the lines. No, no, I'll not deny your right to know why a stranger comes into your habitation or country, in times as serious as these."

"If such is your way of thinking, friend, let me hear your story without more words."

"T is soon told, as I said afore; and shall be honestly told. I'm a young man, and, as yet, have never been on a war-path; but no sooner did the news come among the Delawares, that wampum and a hatchet were about to be sent in to the tribe, than they wished me to go out among the people of my own color, and get the exact state of things for 'em. This I did, and, after delivering my talk to the chiefs, on my return, I met an officer of the crown on the Schoharie, who had messages

to send to some of the fri'ndly tribes that live farther west. This was thought a good occasion for Chingachgook, a young chief who has never struck a foe, and myself; to go on our first war path in company, and an app'intment was made for us, by an old Delaware, to meet at the rock near the foot of this lake. I'll not deny that Chingachgook has another object in view, but it has no consarn with any here, and is his secret and not mine; therefore I'll say no more about it."

"Tis something about a young woman," interrupted Judith hastily, then laughing at her own impetuosity, and even having the grace to colour a little, at the manner in which she had betrayed her readiness to impute such a motive. "If 'tis neither war, nor a hunt, it must be love."

"Ay, it comes easy for the young and handsome, who hear so much of them feelin's, to suppose that they lie at the bottom of most proceedin's; but, on that head, I say nothin'. Chingachgook is to meet me at the rock, an hour afore sunset tomorrow evening, after which we shall go our way together, molesting none but the king's inimies, who are lawfully our own. Knowing Hurry of old, who once trapped in our hunting grounds, and falling in with him on the Schoharie, just as he was on the p'int of starting for his summer ha'nts, we agreed to journey in company; not so much from fear of the Mingos, as from good fellowship, and, as he says, to shorten a long road."

"And you think the trail I saw may have been that of your friend, ahead of his time?" said Hutter.

"That's my idee, which may be wrong, but which may be right. If I saw the moccasin, howsever, I could tell, in a minute, whether it is made in the Delaware fashion, or not."

"Here it is, then," said the quick-witted Judith, who had already gone to the canoe in quest of it. "Tell us what it says; friend or enemy. You look honest, and I believe all you say, whatever father may think."

"That's the way with you, Jude; forever finding out friends, where I distrust foes," grumbled Tom: "but, speak out, young man, and tell us what you think of the moccasin."

"That's not Delaware made," returned Deerslayer, examining the worn and rejected covering for the foot with a cautious eye. "I'm too young on a war-path to be positive, but I should say that moccasin has a northern look, and comes from beyond the Great Lakes."

"If such is the case, we ought not to lie here a minute longer than is necessary," said Hutter, glancing through the leaves of his cover, as if he already distrusted the presence of an enemy on the opposite shore of the narrow and sinuous stream. "It wants but an hour or so of night, and to move in the dark will be impossible, without making a noise that would betray us. Did you hear the echo of a piece in the mountains, half-an-hour since?"

"Yes, old man, and heard the piece itself," answered Hurry, who now felt the indiscretion of which he had been guilty, "for the last was fired from my own shoulder."

"I feared it came from the French Indians; still it may put them on the look-out, and be a means of discovering us. You did wrong to fire in war-time, unless there was good occasion."

"So I begin to think myself, Uncle Tom; and yet, if a man can't trust himself to let off his rifle in a wilderness that is a thousand miles square, lest some inimy should hear it, where's the use in carrying one?"

Hutter now held a long consultation with his two guests, in which the parties came to a true understanding of their situation. He explained the difficulty that would exist in attempting to get the ark out of so swift and narrow a stream, in the dark, without making a noise that could not fail to attract Indian ears. Any strollers in their vicinity would keep near the river or the lake; but the former had swampy shores in many places, and was both so crooked and so fringed with bushes, that it was quite possible to move by daylight without incurring much danger of being seen. More was to be apprehended, perhaps, from the ear than from the eye, especially as long as they were in the short, straitened, and canopied reaches of the stream.

"I never drop down into this cover, which is handy to my traps, and safer than the lake from curious eyes, without providing the means of getting out ag'in," continued this singular being; "and that is easier done by a pull than a push. My anchor is now lying above the suction, in the open lake; and here is a line, you see, to haul us up to it. Without some such help, a single pair of bands would make heavy work in forcing a scow like this up stream. I have a sort of a crab, too, that lightens the pull, on occasion. Jude can use the oar astern as well as myself; and when we fear no enemy, to get out of the river gives us but little trouble."

"What should we gain, Master Hutter, by changing the position?" asked Deerslayer, with a good deal of earnestness; "this is a safe cover, and a stout defence might be made from the inside of this cabin. I've never fou't unless in the way of

tradition; but it seems to me we might beat off twenty Mingos, with palisades like them afore us.”

“Ay, ay; you ‘ve never fought except in traditions, that’s plain enough, young man! Did you ever see as broad a sheet of water as this above us, before you came in upon it with Hurry?”

“I can’t say that I ever did,” Deerslayer answered, modestly. “Youth is the time to l’arn; and I’m far from wishing to raise my voice in counsel, afore it is justified by exper’ence.”

“Well, then, I’ll teach you the disadvantage of fighting in this position, and the advantage of taking to the open lake. Here, you may see, the savages will know where to aim every shot; and it would be too much to hope that some would not find their way through the crevices of the logs. Now, on the other hand, we should have nothing but a forest to aim at. Then we are not safe from fire, here, the bark of this roof being little better than so much kindling-wood. The castle, too, might be entered and ransacked in my absence, and all my possessions overrun and destroyed. Once in the lake, we can be attacked only in boats or on rafts — shall have a fair chance with the enemy-and can protect the castle with the ark. Do you understand this reasoning, youngster?”

“It sounds well — yes, it has a rational sound; and I’ll not gainsay it.”

“Well, old Tom,” cried Hurry, “If we are to move, the sooner we make a beginning, the sooner we shall know whether we are to have our scalps for night-caps, or not.”

As this proposition was self-evident, no one denied its justice. The three men, after a short preliminary explanation, now set about their preparations to move the ark in earnest. The slight fastenings were quickly loosened; and, by hauling on the line, the heavy craft slowly emerged from the cover. It was no sooner free from the incumbrance of the branches, than it swung into the stream, sheering quite close to the western shore, by the force of the current. Not a soul on board heard the rustling of the branches, as the cabin came against the bushes and trees of the western bank, without a feeling of uneasiness; for no one knew at what moment, or in what place, a secret and murderous enemy might unmask himself. Perhaps the gloomy light that still struggled through the impending canopy of leaves, or found its way through the narrow, ribbon-like opening, which seemed to mark, in the air above, the course of the river that flowed beneath, aided in augmenting the appearance of the danger; for it was little more than sufficient to render objects visible, without giving up all their outlines at a glance. Although the sun had not absolutely set, it had withdrawn its direct rays from the valley; and the hues of evening were beginning to gather around objects that stood uncovered, rendering those within the shadows of the woods still more sombre and gloomy.

No interruption followed the movement, however, and, as the men continued to haul on the line, the ark passed steadily ahead, the great breadth of the scow preventing its sinking into the water, and from offering much resistance to the progress of the swift element beneath its bottom. Hutter, too, had adopted a precaution suggested by experience, which might have done credit to a seaman, and which completely prevented any of the annoyances and obstacles which otherwise would have attended the short turns of the river. As the ark descended, heavy stones, attached to the line, were dropped in the centre of the stream, forming local anchors, each of which was kept from dragging by the assistance of those above it, until the uppermost of all was reached, which got its “backing” from the anchor, or grapnel, that lay well out in the lake. In consequence of this expedient, the ark floated clear of the incumbrances of the shore, against which it would otherwise have been unavoidably hauled at every turn, producing embarrassments that Hutter, single-handed, would have found it very difficult to overcome. Favored by this foresight, and stimulated by the apprehension of discovery, Floating Tom and his two athletic companions hauled the ark ahead with quite as much rapidity as comported with the strength of the line. At every turn in the stream, a stone was raised from the bottom, when the direction of the scow changed to one that pointed towards the stone that lay above. In this manner, with the channel buoyed out for him, as a sailor might term it, did Hutter move forward, occasionally urging his friends, in a low and guarded voice, to increase their exertions, and then, as occasions offered, warning them against efforts that might, at particular moments, endanger all by too much zeal. In spite of their long familiarity with the woods, the gloomy character of the shaded river added to the uneasiness that each felt; and when the ark reached the first bend in the Susquehannah, and the eye caught a glimpse of the broader expanse of the lake, all felt a relief, that perhaps none would have been willing to confess. Here the last stone was raised from the bottom, and the line led directly towards the grapnel, which, as Hutter had explained, was dropped above the suction of the current.

“Thank God!” ejaculated Hurry, “there is daylight, and we shall soon have a chance of seeing our inimies, if we are to

feel 'em."

"That is more than you or any man can say," growled Hutter. "There is no spot so likely to harbor a party as the shore around the outlet, and the moment we clear these trees and get into open water, will be the most trying time, since it will leave the enemy a cover, while it puts us out of one. Judith, girl, do you and Hetty leave the oar to take care of itself; and go within the cabin; and be mindful not to show your faces at a window; for they who will look at them won't stop to praise their beauty. And now, Hurry, we 'll step into this outer room ourselves, and haul through the door, where we shall all be safe, from a surprise, at least. Friend Deerslayer, as the current is lighter, and the line has all the strain on it that is prudent, do you keep moving from window to window, taking care not to let your head be seen, if you set any value on life. No one knows when or where we shall hear from our neighbors."

Deerslayer complied, with a sensation that had nothing in common with fear, but which had all the interest of a perfectly novel and a most exciting situation. For the first time in his life he was in the vicinity of enemies, or had good reason to think so; and that, too, under all the thrilling circumstances of Indian surprises and Indian artifices. As he took his stand at the window, the ark was just passing through the narrowest part of the stream, a point where the water first entered what was properly termed the river, and where the trees fairly interlocked overhead, causing the current to rush into an arch of verdure; a feature as appropriate and peculiar to the country, perhaps, as that of Switzerland, where the rivers come rushing literally from chambers of ice.

The ark was in the act of passing the last curve of this leafy entrance, as Deerslayer, having examined all that could be seen of the eastern bank of the river, crossed the room to look from the opposite window, at the western. His arrival at this aperture was most opportune, for he had no sooner placed his eye at a crack, than a sight met his gaze that might well have alarmed a sentinel so young and inexperienced. A sapling overhung the water, in nearly half a circle, having first grown towards the light, and then been pressed down into this form by the weight of the snows; a circumstance of common occurrence in the American woods. On this no less than six Indians had already appeared, others standing ready to follow them, as they left room; each evidently bent on running out on the trunk, and dropping on the roof of the ark as it passed beneath. This would have been an exploit of no great difficulty, the inclination of the tree admitting of an easy passage, the adjoining branches offering ample support for the hands, and the fall being too trifling to be apprehended. When Deerslayer first saw this party, it was just unmasking itself, by ascending the part of the tree nearest to the earth, or that which was much the most difficult to overcome; and his knowledge of Indian habits told him at once that they were all in their war-paint, and belonged to a hostile tribe.

"Pull, Hurry," he cried; "pull for your life, and as you love Judith Hutter! Pull, man, pull!"

This call was made to one that the young man knew had the strength of a giant. It was so earnest and solemn, that both Hutter and March felt it was not idly given, and they applied all their force to the line simultaneously, and at a most critical moment. The scow redoubled its motion, and seemed to glide from under the tree as if conscious of the danger that was impending overhead. Perceiving that they were discovered, the Indians uttered the fearful war-whoop, and running forward on the tree, leaped desperately towards their fancied prize. There were six on the tree, and each made the effort. All but their leader fell into the river more or less distant from the ark, as they came, sooner or later, to the leaping place. The chief, who had taken the dangerous post in advance, having an earlier opportunity than the others, struck the scow just within the stern. The fall proving so much greater than he had anticipated, he was slightly stunned, and for a moment he remained half bent and unconscious of his situation. At this instant Judith rushed from the cabin, her beauty heightened by the excitement that produced the bold act, which flushed her cheek to crimson, and, throwing all her strength into the effort, she pushed the intruder over the edge of the scow, headlong into the river. This decided feat was no sooner accomplished than the woman resumed her sway; Judith looked over the stern to ascertain what had become of the man, and the expression of her eyes softened to concern, next, her cheek crimsoned between shame and surprise at her own temerity, and then she laughed in her own merry and sweet manner. All this occupied less than a minute, when the arm of Deerslayer was thrown around her waist, and she was dragged swiftly within the protection of the cabin. This retreat was not effected too soon. Scarcely were the two in safety, when the forest was filled with yells, and bullets began to patter against the logs.

The ark being in swift motion all this while, it was beyond the danger of pursuit by the time these little events had occurred; and the savages, as soon as the first burst of their anger had subsided, ceased firing, with the consciousness that they were expending their ammunition in vain. When the scow came up over her grapnel, Hutter tripped the latter in a way

not to impede the motion; and being now beyond the influence of the current, the vessel continued to drift ahead, until fairly in the open lake, though still near enough to the land to render exposure to a rifle-bullet dangerous. Hutter and March got out two small sweeps and, covered by the cabin, they soon urged the ark far enough from the shore to leave no inducement to their enemies to make any further attempt to injure them.



## CHAPTER 5

*"Why, let the stricken deer go weep,  
The hart ungalled play,  
For some must watch, while some must sleep,  
Thus runs the world away."*

—HAMLET, III.II.271–74

Another consultation took place in the forward part of the scow, at which both Judith and Hetty were present. As no danger could now approach unseen, immediate uneasiness had given place to the concern which attended the conviction that enemies were in considerable force on the shores of the lake, and that they might be sure no practicable means of accomplishing their own destruction would be neglected. As a matter of course Hutter felt these truths the deepest, his daughters having an habitual reliance on his resources, and knowing too little to appreciate fully all the risks they ran; while his male companions were at liberty to quit him at any moment they saw fit. His first remark showed that he had an eye to the latter circumstance, and might have betrayed, to a keen observer, the apprehension that was just then uppermost.

"We've a great advantage over the Iroquois, or the enemy, whoever they are, in being afloat," he said.

"There's not a canoe on the lake that I don't know where it's hid; and now yours is here. Hurry, there are but three more on the land, and they're so snug in hollow logs that I don't believe the Indians could find them, let them try ever so long."

"There's no telling that — no one can say that," put in Deerslayer; "a hound is not more sartin on the scent than a red-skin, when he expects to get anything by it. Let this party see scalps afore 'em, or plunder, or honor accordin' to their idees of what honor is, and 't will be a tight log that hides a canoe from their eyes."

"You're right, Deerslayer," cried Harry March; "you're downright Gospel in this matter, and I rejice that my bunch of bark is safe enough here, within reach of my arm. I calculate they'll be at all the rest of the canoes afore to-morrow night, if they are in ra'al 'arnest to smoke you out, old Tom, and we may as well overhaul our paddles for a pull."

Hutter made no immediate reply. He looked about him in silence for quite a minute, examining the sky, the lake, and the belt of forest which inclosed it, as it might be hermetically, like one consulting their signs. Nor did he find any alarming symptoms. The boundless woods were sleeping in the deep repose of nature, the heavens were placid, but still luminous with the light of the retreating sun, while the lake looked more lovely and calm than it had before done that day. It was a scene altogether soothing, and of a character to lull the passions into a species of holy calm. How far this effect was produced, however, on the party in the ark, must appear in the progress of our narrative.

"Judith," called out the father, when he had taken this close but short survey of the omens, "night is at hand; find our friends food; a long march gives a sharp appetite."

"We're not starving, Master Hutter," March observed, "for we filled up just as we reached the lake, and for one, I prefer the company of Jude even to her supper. This quiet evening is very agreeable to sit by her side."

"Natur' is natur'," objected Hutter, "and must be fed. Judith, see to the meal, and take your sister to help you. I've a little discourse to hold with you, friends," he continued, as soon as his daughters were out of hearing, "and wish the girls away. You see my situation, and I should like to hear your opinions concerning what is best to be done. Three times have I been burnt out already, but that was on the shore; and I've considered myself as pretty safe ever since I got the castle built, and the ark afloat. My other accidents, however, happened in peaceable times, being nothing more than such flurries as a man must meet with, in the woods; but this matter looks serious, and your ideas would greatly relieve my mind."

"It's my notion, old Tom, that you, and your huts, and your traps, and your whole possessions, hereaway, are in desperate jippardy," returned the matter-of-fact Hurry, who saw no use in concealment. "Accordin' to my idees of valie, they're altogether not worth half as much today as they was yesterday, nor would I give more for 'em, taking the pay in skins."

"Then I've children!" continued the father, making the allusion in a way that it might have puzzled even an indifferent observer to say was intended as a bait, or as an exclamation of paternal concern, "daughters, as you know, Hurry, and good girls too, I may say, though I am their father."

"A man may say anything, Master Hutter, particularly when pressed by time and circumstances. You've darters, as you say, and one of them hasn't her equal on the frontiers for good looks, whatever she may have for good behavior. As for poor Hetty, she's Hetty Hutter, and that's as much as one can say about the poor thing. Give me Jude, if her conduct was only equal to her looks!"

"I see, Harry March, I can only count on you as a fair-weather friend; and I suppose that your companion will be of the same way of thinking," returned the other, with a slight show of pride, that was not altogether without dignity; "well, I must depend on Providence, which will not turn a deaf ear, perhaps, to a father's prayers."

"If you've understood Hurry, here, to mean that he intends to desert you," said Deerslayer, with an earnest simplicity that gave double assurance of its truth, "I think you do him injustice, as I know you do me, in supposing I would follow him, was he so ontrue-hearted as to leave a family of his own color in such a strait as this. I've come on this at take, Master Hutter, to rende'vous a fri'nd, and I only wish he was here himself, as I make no doubt he will be at sunset tomorrow, when you'd have another rifle to aid you; an inexper'enced one, I'll allow, like my own, but one that has proved true so often ag'in the game, big and little, that I'll answer for its sarvice ag'in mortals."

"May I depend on you to stand by me and my daughters, then, Deerslayer?" demanded the old man, with a father's anxiety in his countenance.

"That may you, Floating Tom, if that's your name; and as a brother would stand by a sister, a husband his wife, or a suitor his sweetheart. In this strait you may count on me, through all advarsities; and I think Hurry does discredit to his natur' and wishes, if you can't count on him."

"Not he," cried Judith, thrusting her handsome face out of the door; "his nature is hurry, as well as his name, and he'll hurry off, as soon as he thinks his fine figure in danger. Neither 'old Tom,' nor his 'gals,' will depend much on Master March, now they know him, but you they will rely on, Deerslayer; for your honest face and honest heart tell us that what you promise you will perform."

This was said, as much, perhaps, in affected scorn for Hurry, as in sincerity. Still, it was not said without feeling. The fine face of Judith sufficiently proved the latter circumstance; and if the conscious March fancied that he had never seen in it a stronger display of contempt — a feeling in which the beauty was apt to indulge — than while she was looking at him, it certainly seldom exhibited more of a womanly softness and sensibility, than when her speaking blue eyes were turned on his travelling companion.

"Leave us, Judith," Hutter ordered sternly, before either of the young men could reply; "leave us; and do not return until you come with the venison and fish. The girl has been spoilt by the flattery of the officers, who sometimes find their way up here, Master March, and you'll not think any harm of her silly words."

"You never said truer syllable, old Tom," retorted Hurry, who smarted under Judith's observations; "the devil-tongued youngsters of the garrison have proved her undoing! I scarce know Jude any longer, and shall soon take to admiring her sister, who is getting to be much more to my fancy."

"I'm glad to hear this, Harry, and look upon it as a sign that you're coming to your right senses. Hetty would make a much safer and more rational companion than Jude, and would be much the most likely to listen to your suit, as the officers have, I greatly fear, unsettled her sister's mind."

"No man needs a safer wife than Hetty," said Hurry, laughing, "though I'll not answer for her being of the most rational. But no matter; Deerslayer has not misconceived me, when he told you I should be found at my post. I'll not quit you, Uncle Tom, just now, whatever may be my feelin's and intentions respecting your eldest darter."

Hurry had a respectable reputation for prowess among his associates, and Hutter heard this pledge with a satisfaction that was not concealed. Even the great personal strength of such an aid became of moment, in moving the ark, as well as in the species of hand-to-hand conflicts, that were not unfrequent in the woods; and no commander who was hard pressed could feel more joy at hearing of the arrival of reinforcements, than the borderer experienced at being told this important auxiliary was not about to quit him. A minute before, Hutter would have been well content to compromise his danger, by entering into a compact to act only on the defensive; but no sooner did he feel some security on this point, than the restlessness of man induced him to think of the means of carrying the war into the enemy's country.

"High prices are offered for scalps on both sides," he observed, with a grim smile, as if he felt the force of the inducement, at the very time he wished to affect a superiority to earning money by means that the ordinary feelings of



those who aspire to be civilized men repudiated, even while they were adopted. "It isn't right, perhaps, to take gold for human blood; and yet, when mankind is busy in killing one another, there can be no great harm in adding a little bit of skin to the plunder. What's your sentiments, Hurry, touching these p'int's?"

"That you've made a vast mistake, old man, in calling savage blood human blood, at all. I think no more of a red-skin's scalp than I do of a pair of wolf's ears; and would just as lief finger money for the one as for the other. With white people 't is different, for they've a nat'ral aversion to being scalped; whereas your Indian shaves his head in readiness for the knife, and leaves a lock of hair by way of braggadocio, that one can lay hold of in the bargain."

"That's manly, however, and I felt from the first that we had only to get you on our side, to have your heart and hand," returned Tom, losing all his reserve, as he gained a renewed confidence in the disposition of his companions. "Something more may turn up from this inroad of the red-skins than they bargained for. Deerslayer, I conclude you're of Hurry's way of thinking, and look upon money 'arned in this way as being as likely to pass as money 'arned in trapping or hunting."

"I've no such feelin', nor any wish to harbor it, not I," returned the other. "My gifts are not scalpers' gifts, but such as belong to my religion and color. I'll stand by you, old man, in the ark or in the castle, the canoe or the woods, but I'll not unhumanize my natur' by falling into ways that God intended for another race. If you and Hurry have got any thoughts that lean towards the colony's gold, go by yourselves in s'arch of it, and leave the females to my care. Much as I must differ from you both on all gifts that do not properly belong to a white man, we shall agree that it is the duty of the strong to take care of the weak, especially when the last belong to them that natur' intended man to protect and console by his gentleness and strength."

"Hurry Harry, that is a lesson you might learn and practise on to some advantage," said the sweet, but spirited voice of Judith, from the cabin; a proof that she had over-heard all that had hitherto been said.

"No more of this, Jude," called out the father angrily. "Move farther off; we are about to talk of matters unfit for a woman to listen to."

Hutter did not take any steps, however, to ascertain whether he was obeyed or not; but dropping his voice a little, he pursued the discourse.

"The young man is right, Hurry," he said; "and we can leave the children in his care. Now, my idea is just this; and I think you'll agree that it is rational and correct. There's a large party of these savages on shore and, though I didn't tell it before the girls, for they're womanish, and apt to be troublesome when anything like real work is to be done, there's women among 'em. This I know from moccasin prints; and 't is likely they are hunters, after all, who have been out so long that they know nothing of the war, or of the bounties."

"In which case, old Tom, why was their first salute an attempt to cut our throats?"

"We don't know that their design was so bloody. It's natural and easy for an Indian to fall into ambushes and surprises; and, no doubt they wished to get on board the ark first, and to make their conditions afterwards. That a disapp'inted savage should fire at us, is in rule; and I think nothing of that. Besides, how often they burned me out, and robbed my traps — ay, and pulled trigger on me, in the most peaceful times?"

"The blackguards will do such things, I must allow; and we pay 'em off pretty much in their own c'ine. Women would not be on the war-path, sartainly; and, so far, there's reason in your idee."

"Nor would a hunter be in his war-paint," returned Deerslayer. "I saw the Mingos, and know that they are out on the trail of mortal men; and not for beaver or deer."

"There you have it ag'in, old fellow," said Hurry. "In the way of an eye, now, I'd as soon trust this young man, as trust the oldest settler in the colony; if he says paint, why paint it was."

"Then a hunting-party and a war-party have met, for women must have been with 'em. It's only a few days since the runner went through with the tidings of the troubles; and it may be that warriors have come out to call in their women and children, to get an early blow."

"That would stand the courts, and is just the truth," cried Hurry; "you've got it now, old Tom, and I should like to hear what you mean to make out of it."

"The bounty," returned the other, looking up at his attentive companion in a cool, sullen manner, in which, however, heartless cupidity and indifference to the means were far more conspicuous than any feelings of animosity or revenge.

"If there's women, there's children; and big and little have scalps; the colony pays for all alike."

"More shame to it, that it should do so," interrupted Deerslayer; "more shame to it, that it don't understand its gifts, and pay greater attention to the will of God."

"Hearken to reason, lad, and don't cry out afore you understand a case," returned the unmoved Hurry; "the savages scalp your fri'nds, the Delawares, or Mohicans whichever they may be, among the rest; and why shouldn't we scalp? I will own, it would be ag'in right for you and me now, to go into the settlements and bring out scalps, but it's a very different matter as concerns Indians. A man shouldn't take scalps, if he isn't ready to be scalped, himself, on fitting occasions. One good turn deserves another, the world over. That's reason, and I believe it to be good religion."

"Ay, Master Hurry," again interrupted the rich voice of Judith, "is it religion to say that one bad turn deserves another?"

"I'll never reason ag'in you, Judy, for you beat me with beauty, if you can't with sense. Here's the Canadas paying their Injins for scalps, and why not we pay?"

"Our Indians!" exclaimed the girl, laughing with a sort of melancholy merriment. "Father, father! think no more of this, and listen to the advice of Deerslayer, who has a conscience; which is more than I can say or think of Harry March."

Hutter now rose, and, entering the cabin, he compelled his daughters to go into the adjoining room, when he secured both the doors, and returned. Then he and Hurry pursued the subject; but, as the purport of all that was material in this discourse will appear in the narrative, it need not be related here in detail. The reader, however, can have no difficulty in comprehending the morality that presided over their conference. It was, in truth, that which, in some form or other, rules most of the acts of men, and in which the controlling principle is that one wrong will justify another. Their enemies paid for scalps, and this was sufficient to justify the colony for retaliating. It is true, the French used the same argument, a circumstance, as Hurry took occasion to observe in answer to one of Deerslayer's objections, that proved its truth, as mortal enemies would not be likely to have recourse to the same reason unless it were a good one. But neither Hutter nor Hurry was a man likely to stick at trifles in matters connected with the right of the aborigines, since it is one of the consequences of aggression that it hardens the conscience, as the only means of quieting it. In the most peaceable state of the country, a species of warfare was carried on between the Indians, especially those of the Canadas, and men of their caste; and the moment an actual and recognized warfare existed, it was regarded as the means of lawfully revenging a thousand wrongs, real and imaginary. Then, again, there was some truth, and a good deal of expediency, in the principle of retaliation, of which they both availed themselves, in particular, to answer the objections of their juster-minded and more scrupulous companion.

"You must fight a man with his own we'pons, Deerslayer," cried Hurry, in his uncouth dialect, and in his dogmatical manner of disposing of all oral propositions; "if he's fierce you must be fiercer; if he's stout of heart, you must be stouter. This is the way to get the better of Christian or savage: by keeping up to this trail, you'll get soonest to the ind of your journey."

"That's not Moravian doctrine, which teaches that all are to be judged according to their talents or l'arning; the Injin like an Injin; and the white man like a white man. Some of their teachers say, that if you're struck on the cheek, it's a duty to turn the other side of the face, and take another blow, instead of seeking revenge, whereby I understand."

"That's enough!" shouted Hurry; "that's all I want, to prove a man's doctrine! How long would it take to kick a man through the colony — in at one ind and out at the other, on that principle?"

"Don't mistake me, March," returned the young hunter, with dignity; "I don't understand by this any more than that it's best to do this, if possible. Revenge is an Injin gift, and forgiveness a white man's. That's all. Overlook all you can is what's meant; and not revenge all you can. As for kicking, Master Hurry," and Deerslayer's sunburnt cheek flushed as he continued, "into the colony, or out of the colony, that's neither here nor there, seeing no one proposes it, and no one would be likely to put up with it. What I wish to say is, that a red-skin's scalping don't justify a pale-face's scalping."

"Do as you're done by, Deerslayer; that's ever the Christian parson's doctrine."

"No, Hurry, I've asked the Moravians consarning that; and it's altogether different. 'Do as you would be done by,' they tell me, is the true saying, while men practyse the false. They think all the colonies wrong that offer bounties for scalps, and believe no blessing will follow the measures. Above all things, they forbid revenge."

"That for your Moravians!" cried March, snapping his fingers; "they're the next thing to Quakers; and if you'd believe

all they tell you, not even a 'rat would be skinned, out of marcy. Who ever heard of marcy on a muskrat!"

The disdainful manner of Hurry prevented a reply, and he and the old man resumed the discussion of their plans in a more quiet and confidential manner. This confidence lasted until Judith appeared, bearing the simple but savory supper. March observed, with a little surprise, that she placed the choicest bits before Deerslayer, and that in the little nameless attentions it was in her power to bestow, she quite obviously manifested a desire to let it be seen that she deemed him the honored guest. Accustomed, however, to the waywardness and coquetry of the beauty, this discovery gave him little concern, and he ate with an appetite that was in no degree disturbed by any moral causes. The easily-digested food of the forests offering the fewest possible obstacles to the gratification of this great animal indulgence, Deerslayer, notwithstanding the hearty meal both had taken in the woods, was in no manner behind his companion in doing justice to the viands.

An hour later the scene had greatly changed. The lake was still placid and glassy, but the gloom of the hour had succeeded to the soft twilight of a summer evening, and all within the dark setting of the woods lay in the quiet repose of night. The forests gave up no song, or cry, or even murmur, but looked down from the hills on the lovely basin they encircled, in solemn stillness; and the only sound that was audible was the regular dip of the sweeps, at which Hurry and Deerslayer lazily pushed, impelling the ark towards the castle. Hutter had withdrawn to the stern of the scow, in order to steer, but, finding that the young men kept even strokes, and held the desired course by their own skill, he permitted the oar to drag in the water, took a seat on the end of the vessel, and lighted his pipe. He had not been thus placed many minutes, ere Hetty came stealthily out of the cabin, or house, as they usually termed that part of the ark, and placed herself at his feet, on a little bench that she brought with her. As this movement was by no means unusual in his feeble-minded child, the old man paid no other attention to it than to lay his hand kindly on her head, in an affectionate and approving manner; an act of grace that the girl received in meek silence.

After a pause of several minutes, Hetty began to sing. Her voice was low and tremulous, but it was earnest and solemn. The words and the tune were of the simplest form, the first being a hymn that she had been taught by her mother, and the last one of those natural melodies that find favor with all classes, in every age, coming from and being addressed to the feelings. Hutter never listened to this simple strain without finding his heart and manner softened; facts that his daughter well knew, and by which she had often profited, through the sort of holy instinct that enlightens the weak of mind, more especially in their aims toward good.

Hetty's low, sweet tones had not been raised many moments, when the dip of the oars ceased, and the holy strain arose singly on the breathing silence of the wilderness. As if she gathered courage with the theme, her powers appeared to increase as she proceeded; and though nothing vulgar or noisy mingled in her melody, its strength and melancholy tenderness grew on the ear, until the air was filled with this simple homage of a soul that seemed almost spotless. That the men forward were not indifferent to this touching interruption, was proved by their inaction; nor did their oars again dip until the last of the sweet sounds had actually died among the remarkable shores, which, at that witching hour, would waft even the lowest modulations of the human voice more than a mile. Hutter was much affected; for rude as he was by early habits, and even ruthless as he had got to be by long exposure to the practices of the wilderness, his nature was of that fearful mixture of good and evil that so generally enters into the moral composition of man.

"You are sad tonight, child," said the father, whose manner and language usually assumed some of the gentleness and elevation of the civilized life he had led in youth, when he thus communed with this particular child; "we have just escaped from enemies, and ought rather to rejoice."

"You can never do it, father!" said Hetty, in a low, remonstrating manner, taking his hard, knotty hand into both her own; "you have talked long with Harry March; but neither of you have the heart to do it!"

"This is going beyond your means, foolish child; you must have been naughty enough to have listened, or you could know nothing of our talk."

"Why should you and Hurry kill people — especially women and children?"

"Peace, girl, peace; we are at war, and must do to our enemies as our enemies would do to us."

"That's not it, father! I heard Deerslayer say how it was. You must do to your enemies as you wish your enemies would do to you. No man wishes his enemies to kill him."

"We kill our enemies in war, girl, lest they should kill us. One side or the other must begin; and them that begin first,

are most apt to get the victory. You know nothing about these things, poor Hetty, and had best say nothing.”

“Judith says it is wrong, father; and Judith has sense though I have none.”

“Jude understands better than to talk to me of these matters; for she has sense, as you say, and knows I’ll not bear it. Which would you prefer, Hetty; to have your own scalp taken, and sold to the French, or that we should kill our enemies, and keep them from harming us?”

“That’s not it, father! Don’t kill them, nor let them kill us. Sell your skins, and get more, if you can; but don’t sell human blood.”

“Come, come, child; let us talk of matters you understand. Are you glad to see our old friend, March, back again? You like Hurry, and must know that one day he may be your brother — if not something nearer.”

“That can’t be, father,” returned the girl, after a considerable pause; “Hurry has had one father, and one mother; and people never have two.”

“So much for your weak mind, Hetty. When Jude marries, her husband’s father will be her father, and her husband’s sister her sister. If she should marry Hurry, then he will be your brother.”

“Judith will never have Hurry,” returned the girl mildly, but positively; “Judith don’t like Hurry.”

“That’s more than you can know, Hetty. Harry March is the handsomest, and the strongest, and the boldest young man that ever visits the lake; and, as Jude is the greatest beauty, I don’t see why they shouldn’t come together. He has as much as promised that he will enter into this job with me, on condition that I’ll consent.”

Hetty began to move her body back and forth, and other-wise to express mental agitation; but she made no answer for more than a minute. Her father, accustomed to her manner, and suspecting no immediate cause of concern, continued to smoke with the apparent phlegm which would seem to belong to that particular species of enjoyment.

“Hurry is handsome, father,” said Hetty, with a simple emphasis, that she might have hesitated about using, had her mind been more alive to the inferences of others.

“I told you so, child,” muttered old Hutter, without removing the pipe from between his teeth; “he’s the likeliest youth in these parts; and Jude is the likeliest young woman I’ve met with since her poor mother was in her best days.”

“Is it wicked to be ugly, father?”

“One might be guilty of worse things — but you’re by no means ugly; though not so comely as Jude.”

“Is Judith any happier for being so handsome?”

“She may be, child, and she may not be. But talk of other matters now, for you hardly understand these, poor Hetty. How do you like our new acquaintance, Deerslayer?”

“He isn’t handsome, father. Hurry is far handsomer than Deerslayer.”

“That’s true; but they say he is a noted hunter! His fame had reached me before I ever saw him; and I did hope he would prove to be as stout a warrior as he is dexterous with the deer. All men are not alike, however, child; and it takes time, as I know by experience, to give a man a true wilderness heart.”

“Have I got a wilderness heart, father — and Hurry, is his heart true wilderness?”

“You sometimes ask queer questions, Hetty! Your heart is good, child, and fitter for the settlements than for the woods; while your reason is fitter for the woods than for the settlements.”

“Why has Judith more reason than I, father?”

“Heaven help thee, child: this is more than I can answer. God gives sense, and appearance, and all these things; and he grants them as he seeth fit. Dost thou wish for more sense?”

“Not I. The little I have troubles me; for when I think the hardest, then I feel the unhappiest. I don’t believe thinking is good for me, though I do wish I was as handsome as Judith!”

“Why so, poor child? Thy sister’s beauty may cause her trouble, as it caused her mother before her. It’s no advantage, Hetty, to be so marked for anything as to become an object of envy, or to be sought after more than others.”

“Mother was good, if she was handsome,” returned the girl, the tears starting to her eyes, as usually happened when she adverted to her deceased parent.

Old Hutter, if not equally affected, was moody and silent at this allusion to his wife. He continued smoking, without

appearing disposed to make any answer, until his simple-minded daughter repeated her remark, in a way to show that she felt uneasiness lest he might be inclined to deny her assertion. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and laying his hand in a sort of rough kindness on the girl's head, he made a reply.

"Thy mother was too good for this world," he said; "though others might not think so. Her good looks did not befriend her; and you have no occasion to mourn that you are not as much like her as your sister. Think less of beauty, child, and more of your duty, and you'll be as happy on this lake as you could be in the king's palace."

"I know it, father; but Hurry says beauty is everything in a young woman."

Hutter made an ejaculation expressive of dissatisfaction, and went forward, passing through the house in order to do so. Hetty's simple betrayal of her weakness in behalf of March gave him uneasiness on a subject concerning which he had never felt before, and he determined to come to an explanation at once with his visitor; for directness of speech and decision in conduct were two of the best qualities of this rude being, in whom the seeds of a better education seemed to be constantly struggling upwards, to be choked by the fruits of a life in which his hard struggles for subsistence and security had steeled his feelings and indurated his nature. When he reached the forward end of the scow, he manifested an intention to relieve Deerslayer at the oar, directing the latter to take his own place aft. By these changes, the old man and Hurry were again left alone, while the young hunter was transferred to the other end of the ark.

Hetty had disappeared when Deerslayer reached his new post, and for some little time he directed the course of the slow-moving craft by himself. It was not long, however, before Judith came out of the cabin, as if disposed to do the honors of the place to a stranger engaged in the service of her family. The starlight was sufficient to permit objects to be plainly distinguished when near at hand, and the bright eyes of the girl had an expression of kindness in them, when they met those of the youth, that the latter was easily enabled to discover. Her rich hair shaded her spirited and yet soft countenance, even at that hour rendering it the more beautiful-as the rose is loveliest when reposing amid the shadows and contrasts of its native foliage. Little ceremony is used in the intercourse of the woods; and Judith had acquired a readiness of address, by the admiration that she so generally excited, which, if it did not amount to forwardness, certainly in no degree lent to her charms the aid of that retiring modesty on which poets love to dwell.

"I thought I should have killed myself with laughing, Deerslayer," the beauty abruptly but coquettishly commenced, "when I saw that Indian dive into the river! He was a good-looking savage, too," the girl always dwelt on personal beauty as a sort of merit, "and yet one couldn't stop to consider whether his paint would stand water!"

"And I thought they would have killed you with their weapons, Judith," returned Deerslayer; "it was an awful risk for a female to run in the face of a dozen Mingos!"

"Did that make you come out of the cabin, in spite of their rifles, too?" asked the girl, with more real interest than she would have cared to betray, though with an indifference of manner that was the result of a good deal of practice united to native readiness.

"Men ar'n't apt to see females in danger, and not come to their assistance. Even a Mingo knows that."

This sentiment was uttered with as much simplicity of manner as of feeling, and Judith rewarded it with a smile so sweet, that even Deerslayer, who had imbibed a prejudice against the girl in consequence of Hurry's suspicions of her levity, felt its charm, notwithstanding half its winning influence was lost in the feeble light. It at once created a sort of confidence between them, and the discourse was continued on the part of the hunter, without the lively consciousness of the character of this coquette of the wilderness, with which it had certainly commenced.

"You are a man of deeds, and not of words, I see plainly, Deerslayer," continued the beauty, taking her seat near the spot where the other stood, "and I foresee we shall be very good friends. Hurry Harry has a tongue, and, giant as he is, he talks more than he performs."

"March is your friend, Judith; and friends should be tender of each other, when apart."

"We all know what Hurry's friendship comes to! Let him have his own way in everything, and he's the best fellow in the colony; but 'head him off,' as you say of the deer, and he is master of everything near him but himself. Hurry is no favorite of mine, Deerslayer; and I dare say, if the truth was known, and his conversation about me repeated, it would be found that he thinks no better of me than I own I do of him."

The latter part of this speech was not uttered without uneasiness. Had the girl's companion been more sophisticated, he might have observed the averted face, the manner in which the pretty little foot was agitated, and other signs that, for

some unexplained reason, the opinions of March were not quite as much a matter of indifference to her as she thought fit to pretend. Whether this was no more than the ordinary working of female vanity, feeling keenly even when it affected not to feel at all, or whether it proceeded from that deeply-seated consciousness of right and wrong which God himself has implanted in our breasts that we may know good from evil, will be made more apparent to the reader as we proceed in the tale. Deerslayer felt embarrassed. He well remembered the cruel imputations left by March's distrust; and, while he did not wish to injure his associate's suit by exciting resentment against him, his tongue was one that literally knew no guile. To answer without saying more or less than he wished, was consequently a delicate duty.

"March has his say of all things in natur', whether of fri'nd or foe," slowly and cautiously rejoined the hunter. "He's one of them that speak as they feel while the tongue's a-going, and that's sometimes different from what they'd speak if they took time to consider. Give me a Delaware, Judith, for one that reflects and ruminates on his idees! Inmity has made him thoughtful, and a loose tongue is no ricommand at their council fires."

"I dare say March's tongue goes free enough when it gets on the subject of Judith Hutter and her sister," said the girl, rousing herself as if in careless disdain. "Young women's good names are a pleasant matter of discourse with some that wouldn't dare be so open-mouthed if there was a brother in the way. Master March may find it pleasant to traduce us, but sooner or later he'll repent.

"Nay, Judith, this is taking the matter up too much in 'arnest. Hurry has never whispered a syllable ag'in the good name of Hetty, to begin with—"

"I see how it is — I see how it is," impetuously interrupted Judith. "I am the one he sees fit to scorch with his withering tongue! Hetty, indeed! Poor Hetty!" she continued, her voice sinking into low, husky tones, that seemed nearly to stifle her in the utterance; "she is beyond and above his slanderous malice! Poor Hetty! If God has created her feeble-minded, the weakness lies altogether on the side of errors of which she seems to know nothing. The earth never held a purer being than Hetty Hutter, Deerslayer."

"I can believe it — yes, I can believe that, Judith, and I hope 'arnestly that the same can be said of her handsome sister."

There was a soothing sincerity in the voice of Deerslayer, which touched the girl's feelings; nor did the allusion to her beauty lessen the effect with one who only knew too well the power of her personal charms. Nevertheless, the still, small voice of conscience was not hushed, and it prompted the answer which she made, after giving herself time to reflect.

"I dare say Hurry had some of his vile hints about the people of the garrisons," she added. "He knows they are gentlemen, and can never forgive any one for being what he feels he can never become himself."

"Not in the sense of a king's officer, Judith, sartainly, for March has no turn thataway; but in the sense of reality, why may not a beaver-hunter be as respectable as a governor? Since you speak of it yourself, I'll not deny that he did complain of one as humble as you being so much in the company of scarlet coats and silken sashes. But 't was jealousy that brought it out of him, and I do think he mourned over his own thoughts as a mother would have mourned over her child."

Perhaps Deerslayer was not aware of the full meaning that his earnest language conveyed. It is certain that he did not see the color that crimsoned the whole of Judith's fine face, nor detect the uncontrollable distress that immediately after changed its hue to deadly paleness. A minute or two elapsed in profound stillness, the splash of the water seeming to occupy all the avenues of sound; and then Judith arose, and grasped the hand of the hunter, almost convulsively, with one of her own.

"Deerslayer," she said, hurriedly, "I'm glad the ice is broke between us. They say that sudden friendships lead to long enmities, but I do not believe it will turn out so with us. I know not how it is-but you are the first man I ever met, who did not seem to wish to flatter — to wish my ruin — to be an enemy in disguise — never mind; say nothing to Hurry, and another time we'll talk together again."

As the girl released her grasp, she vanished in the house, leaving the astonished young man standing at the steering-oar, as motionless as one of the pines on the hills. So abstracted, indeed, had his thoughts become, that he was hailed by Hutter to keep the scow's head in the right direction, before he remembered his actual situation.



## CHAPTER 6

*"So spake the apostate Angel, though in pain,  
Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair."*

—PARADISE LOST, I. 125–26.

Shortly after the disappearance of Judith, a light southerly air arose, and Hutter set a large square sail, that had once been the flying top-sail of an Albany sloop, but which having become threadbare in catching the breezes of Tappan, had been condemned and sold. He had a light, tough spar of tamarack that he could raise on occasion, and with a little contrivance, his duck was spread to the wind in a sufficiently professional manner. The effect on the ark was such as to supersede the necessity of rowing; and in about two hours the castle was seen, in the darkness, rising out of the water, at the distance of a hundred yards. The sail was then lowered, and by slow degrees the scow drifted up to the building, and was secured.

No one had visited the house since Hurry and his companion left it. The place was found in the quiet of midnight, a sort of type of the solitude of a wilderness. As an enemy was known to be near, Hutter directed his daughters to abstain from the use of lights, luxuries in which they seldom indulged during the warm months, lest they might prove beacons to direct their foes where they might be found.

"In open daylight I shouldn't fear a host of savages behind these stout logs, and they without any cover to skulk into," added Hutter, when he had explained to his guests the reasons why he forbade the use of light; "for I've three or four trusty weapons always loaded, and Killdeer, in particular, is a piece that never misses. But it's a different thing at night. A canoe might get upon us unseen, in the dark; and the savages have so many cunning ways of attacking, that I look upon it as bad enough to deal with 'em under a bright sun. I built this dwelling in order to have 'em at arm's length, in case we should ever get to blows again. Some people think it's too open and exposed, but I'm for anchoring out here, clear of underbrush and thickets, as the surest means of making a safe berth."

"You was once a sailor, they tell me, old Tom?" said Hurry, in his abrupt manner, struck by one or two expressions that the other had just used, "and some people believe you could give us strange accounts of inimies and shipwrecks, if you'd a mind to come out with all you know?"

"There are people in this world, Hurry," returned the other, evasively, "who live on other men's thoughts; and some such often find their way into the woods. What I've been, or what I've seen in youth, is of less matter now than what the savages are. It's of more account to find out what will happen in the next twenty-four hours than to talk over what happened twenty-four years since."

"That's judgment, Deerslayer; yes, that's sound judgment. Here's Judith and Hetty to take care of, to say nothing of our own top-knots; and, for my part, I can sleep as well in the dark as I could under a noonday sun. To me it's no great matter whether there is light or not, to see to shut my eyes by."

As Deerslayer seldom thought it necessary to answer his companion's peculiar vein of humor, and Hutter was evidently indisposed to dwell longer on the subject, it's discussion ceased with this remark. The latter had something more on his mind, however, than recollections. His daughters had no sooner left them, with an expressed intention of going to bed, than he invited his two companions to follow him again into the scow. Here the old man opened his project, keeping back the portion that he had reserved for execution by Hurry and himself.

"The great object for people posted like ourselves is to command the water," he commenced. "So long as there is no other craft on the lake, a bark canoe is as good as a man of-war, since the castle will not be easily taken by swimming. Now, there are but five canoes remaining in these parts, two of which are mine, and one is Hurry's. These three we have with us here; one being fastened in the canoe-dock beneath the house, and the other two being alongside the scow. The other canoes are housed on the shore, in hollow logs, and the savages, who are such venomous enemies, will leave no likely place unexamined in the morning, if they 're serious in s'arch of bounties—"

"Now, friend Hutter," interrupted Hurry, "the Indian don't live that can find a canoe that is suitably wintered. I've done something at this business before now, and Deerslayer here knows that I am one that can hide a craft in such a way that I can't find it myself."

"Very true, Hurry," put in the person to whom the appeal had been made, "but you overlook the sarcumstance that if

you couldn't see the trail of the man who did the job, I could. I'm of Master Hutter's mind, that it's far wiser to mistrust a savage's ingenuity, than to build any great expectations on his want of eye-sight. If these two canoes can be got off to the castle, therefore, the sooner it's done the better."

"Will you be of the party that's to do it?" demanded Hutter, in a way to show that the proposal both surprised and pleased him.

"Sartain. I'm ready to enlist in any enterprise that's not ag'in a white man's lawful gifts. Natur' orders us to defend our lives, and the lives of others, too, when there's occasion and opportunity. I'll follow you, Floating Tom, into the Mingo camp, on such an arr'nd, and will strive to do my duty, should we come to blows; though, never having been tried in battle, I don't like to promise more than I may be able to perform. We all know our wishes, but none know their might till put to the proof."

"That's modest and suitable, lad," exclaimed Hurry. "You've never yet heard the crack of an angry rifle; and, let me tell you, 'tis as different from the persuasion of one of your venison speeches, as the laugh of Judith Hutter, in her best humor, is from the scolding of a Dutch house keeper on the Mohawk. I don't expect you'll prove much of a warrior, Deerslayer, though your equal with the bucks and the does don't exist in all these parts. As for the ra'al sarvice, however, you'll turn out rather rearward, according to my consait."

"We'll see, Hurry, we'll see," returned the other, meekly; so far as human eye could discover, not at all disturbed by these expressed doubts concerning his conduct on a point on which men are sensitive, precisely in the degree that they feel the consciousness of demerit; "having never been tried, I'll wait to know, before I form any opinion of myself; and then there'll be sartainty, instead of bragging. I've heard of them that was valiant afore the fight, who did little in it; and of them that waited to know their own tempers, and found that they weren't as bad as some expected, when put to the proof."

"At any rate, we know you can use a paddle, young man," said Hutter, "and that's all we shall ask of you tonight. Let us waste no more time, but get into the canoe, and do, in place of talking."

As Hutter led the way, in the execution of his project, the boat was soon ready, with Hurry and Deerslayer at the paddles. Before the old man embarked himself, however, he held a conference of several minutes with Judith, entering the house for that purpose; then, returning, he took his place in the canoe, which left the side of the ark at the next instant.

Had there been a temple reared to God, in that solitary wilderness, its clock would have told the hour of midnight as the party set forth on their expedition. The darkness had increased, though the night was still clear, and the light of the stars sufficed for all the purposes of the adventurers. Hutter alone knew the places where the canoes were hid, and he directed the course, while his two athletic companions raised and dipped their paddles with proper caution, lest the sound should be carried to the ears of their enemies, across that sheet of placid water, in the stillness of deep night. But the bark was too light to require any extraordinary efforts, and skill supplying the place of strength, in about half an hour they were approaching the shore, at a point near a league from the castle.

"Lay on your paddles, men," said Hutter, in a low voice, "and let us look about us for a moment. We must now be all eyes and ears, for these vermin have noses like bloodhounds."

The shores of the lake were examined closely, in order to discover any glimmering of light that might have been left in a camp; and the men strained their eyes, in the obscurity, to see if some thread of smoke was not still stealing along the mountainside, as it arose from the dying embers of a fire. Nothing unusual could be traced; and as the position was at some distance from the outlet, or the spot where the savages had been met, it was thought safe to land. The paddles were plied again, and the bows of the canoe ground upon the gravelly beach with a gentle motion, and a sound barely audible. Hutter and Hurry immediately landed, the former carrying his own and his friend's rifle, leaving Deerslayer in charge of the canoe. The hollow log lay a little distance up the side of the mountain, and the old man led the way towards it, using so much caution as to stop at every third or fourth step, to listen if any tread betrayed the presence of a foe. The same death-like stillness, however, reigned on the midnight scene, and the desired place was reached without an occurrence to induce alarm.

"This is it," whispered Hutter, laying a foot on the trunk of a fallen linden; "hand me the paddles first, and draw the boat out with care, for the wretches may have left it for a bait, after all."

"Keep my rifle handy, butt towards me, old fellow," answered March. "If they attack me loaded, I shall want to unload the piece at 'em, at least. And feel if the pan is full."



"All's right," muttered the other; "move slow, when you get your load, and let me lead the way."

The canoe was drawn out of the log with the utmost care, raised by Hurry to his shoulder, and the two began to return to the shore, moving but a step at a time, lest they should tumble down the steep declivity. The distance was not great, but the descent was extremely difficult; and, towards the end of their little journey, Deerslayer was obliged to land and meet them, in order to aid in lifting the canoe through the bushes. With his assistance the task was successfully accomplished, and the light craft soon floated by the side of the other canoe. This was no sooner done, than all three turned anxiously towards the forest and the mountain, expecting an enemy to break out of the one, or to come rushing down the other. Still the silence was unbroken, and they all embarked with the caution that had been used in coming ashore.

Hutter now steered broad off towards the centre of the lake. Having got a sufficient distance from the shore, he cast his prize loose, knowing that it would drift slowly up the lake before the light southerly air, and intending to find it on his return. Thus relieved of his tow, the old man held his way down the lake, steering towards the very point where Hurry had made his fruitless attempt on the life of the deer. As the distance from this point to the outlet was less than a mile, it was like entering an enemy's country; and redoubled caution became necessary. They reached the extremity of the point, however, and landed in safety on the little gravelly beach already mentioned. Unlike the last place at which they had gone ashore, here was no acclivity to ascend, the mountains looming up in the darkness quite a quarter of a mile farther west, leaving a margin of level ground between them and the strand. The point itself, though long, and covered with tall trees, was nearly flat, and for some distance only a few yards in width. Hutter and Hurry landed as before, leaving their companion in charge of the boat.

In this instance, the dead tree that contained the canoe of which they had come in quest lay about half-way between the extremity of the narrow slip of land and the place where it joined the main shore; and knowing that there was water so near him on his left, the old man led the way along the eastern side of the belt with some confidence walking boldly, though still with caution. He had landed at the point expressly to get a glimpse into the bay and to make certain that the coast was clear; otherwise he would have come ashore directly abreast of the hollow tree. There was no difficulty in finding the latter, from which the canoe was drawn as before, and instead of carrying it down to the place where Deerslayer lay, it was launched at the nearest favorable spot. As soon as it was in the water, Hurry entered it, and paddled round to the point, whither Hutter also proceeded, following the beach. As the three men had now in their possession all the boats on the lake, their confidence was greatly increased, and there was no longer the same feverish desire to quit the shore, or the same necessity for extreme caution. Their position on the extremity of the long, narrow bit of land added to the feeling of security, as it permitted an enemy to approach in only one direction, that in their front, and under circumstances that would render discovery, with their habitual vigilance, almost certain. The three now landed together, and stood grouped in consultation on the gravelly point.

"We've fairly tree'd the scamps," said Hurry, chuckling at their success; "if they wish to visit the castle, let 'em wade or swim! Old Tom, that idee of your'n, in burrowing out in the lake, was high proof, and carries a fine bead. There be men who would think the land safer than the water; but, after all, reason shows it isn't; the beaver, and rats, and other l'arned creatur's taking to the last when hard pressed. I call our position now, entrenched, and set the Canadas at defiance."

"Let us paddle along this south shore," said Hutter, "and see if there's no sign of an encampment; but, first, let me have a better look into the bay, for no one has been far enough round the inner shore of the point to make suit of that quarter yet."

As Hutter ceased speaking, all three moved in the direction he had named. Scarce had they fairly opened the bottom of the bay, when a general start proved that their eyes had lighted on a common object at the same instant. It was no more than a dying brand, giving out its flickering and failing light; but at that hour, and in that place, it was at once as conspicuous as "a good deed in a naughty world." There was not a shadow of doubt that this fire had been kindled at an encampment of the Indians. The situation, sheltered from observation on all sides but one, and even on that except for a very short distance, proved that more care had been taken to conceal the spot than would be used for ordinary purposes, and Hutter, who knew that a spring was near at hand, as well as one of the best fishing-stations on the lake, immediately inferred that this encampment contained the women and children of the party.

"That's not a warrior's encampment," he growled to Hurry; "and there's bounty enough sleeping round that fire to make a heavy division of head-money. Send the lad to the canoes, for there'll come no good of him in such an onset, and let us take the matter in hand at once, like men."

"There's judgment in your notion, old Tom, and I like it to the backbone. Deerslayer, do you get into the canoe, lad, and paddle off into the lake with the spare one, and set it adrift, as we did with the other; after which you can float along shore, as near as you can get to the head of the bay, keeping outside the point, howsoever, and outside the rushes, too. You can hear us when we want you; and if there's any delay, I'll call like a loon — yes, that'll do it — the call of a loon shall be the signal. If you hear rifles, and feel like sogering, why, you may close in, and see if you can make the same hand with the savages that you do with the deer."

"If my wishes could be followed, this matter would not be undertaken, Hurry —"

"Quite true — nobody denies it, boy; but your wishes can't be followed; and that inds the matter. So just canoe yourself off into the middle of the lake, and by the time you get back there'll be movements in that camp!"

The young man set about complying with great reluctance and a heavy heart. He knew the prejudices of the frontiersmen too well, however, to attempt a remonstrance. The latter, indeed, under the circumstances, might prove dangerous, as it would certainly prove useless. He paddled the canoe, therefore, silently and with the former caution, to a spot near the centre of the placid sheet of water, and set the boat just recovered adrift, to float towards the castle, before the light southerly air. This expedient had been adopted, in both cases, under the certainty that the drift could not carry the light barks more than a league or two, before the return of light, when they might easily be overtaken in order to prevent any wandering savage from using them, by swimming off and getting possession, a possible but scarcely a probable event, all the paddles were retained.

No sooner had he set the recovered canoe adrift, than Deerslayer turned the bows of his own towards the point on the shore that had been indicated by Hurry. So light was the movement of the little craft, and so steady the sweep of its master's arm, that ten minutes had not elapsed ere it was again approaching the land, having, in that brief time, passed over fully half a mile of distance. As soon as Deerslayer's eye caught a glimpse of the rushes, of which there were many growing in the water a hundred feet from the shore, he arrested the motion of the canoe, and anchored his boat by holding fast to the delicate but tenacious stem of one of the drooping plants. Here he remained, awaiting, with an intensity of suspense that can be easily imagined, the result of the hazardous enterprise.

It would be difficult to convey to the minds of those who have never witnessed it, the sublimity that characterizes the silence of a solitude as deep as that which now reigned over the Glimmerglass. In the present instance, this sublimity was increased by the gloom of night, which threw its shadowy and fantastic forms around the lake, the forest, and the hills. It is not easy, indeed, to conceive of any place more favorable to heighten these natural impressions, than that Deerslayer now occupied. The size of the lake brought all within the reach of human senses, while it displayed so much of the imposing scene at a single view, giving up, as it might be, at a glance, a sufficiency to produce the deepest impressions. As has been said, this was the first lake Deerslayer had ever seen. Hitherto, his experience had been limited to the courses of rivers and smaller streams, and never before had he seen so much of that wilderness, which he so well loved, spread before his gaze. Accustomed to the forest, however, his mind was capable of portraying all its hidden mysteries, as he looked upon its leafy surface. This was also the first time he had been on a trail where human lives depended on the issue. His ears had often drunk in the traditions of frontier warfare, but he had never yet been confronted with an enemy.

The reader will readily understand, therefore, how intense must have been the expectation of the young man, as he sat in his solitary canoe, endeavoring to catch the smallest sound that might denote the course of things on shore. His training had been perfect, so far as theory could go, and his self-possession, notwithstanding the high excitement, that was the fruit of novelty, would have done credit to a veteran. The visible evidences of the existence of the camp, or of the fire could not be detected from the spot where the canoe lay, and he was compelled to depend on the sense of hearing alone. He did not feel impatient, for the lessons he had heard taught him the virtue of patience, and, most of all, inculcated the necessity of wariness in conducting any covert assault on the Indians. Once he thought he heard the cracking of a dried twig, but expectation was so intense it might mislead him. In this manner minute after minute passed, until the whole time since he left his companions was extended to quite an hour. Deerslayer knew not whether to rejoice in or to mourn over this cautious delay, for, if it augured security to his associates, it foretold destruction to the feeble and innocent.

It might have been an hour and a half after his companions and he had parted, when Deerslayer was aroused by a sound that filled him equally with concern and surprise. The quavering call of a loon arose from the opposite side of the lake, evidently at no great distance from its outlet. There was no mistaking the note of this bird, which is so familiar to all who know the sounds of the American lakes. Shrill, tremulous, loud, and sufficiently prolonged, it seems the very cry of

warning. It is often raised, also, at night, an exception to the habits of most of the other feathered inmates of the wilderness; a circumstance which had induced Hurry to select it as his own signal. There had been sufficient time, certainly, for the two adventurers to make their way by land from the point where they had been left to that whence the call had come, but it was not probable that they would adopt such a course. Had the camp been deserted they would have summoned Deerslayer to the shore, and, did it prove to be peopled, there could be no sufficient motive for circling it, in order to re-embark at so great a distance. Should he obey the signal, and be drawn away from the landing, the lives of those who depended on him might be the forfeit — and, should he neglect the call, on the supposition that it had been really made, the consequences might be equally disastrous, though from a different cause. In this indecision he waited, trusting that the call, whether feigned or natural, would be speedily renewed. Nor was he mistaken. A very few minutes elapsed before the same shrill warning cry was repeated, and from the same part of the lake. This time, being on the alert, his senses were not deceived. Although he had often heard admirable imitations of this bird, and was no mean adept himself in raising its notes, he felt satisfied that Hurry, to whose efforts in that way he had attended, could never so completely and closely follow nature. He determined, therefore, to disregard that cry, and to wait for one less perfect and nearer at hand.

Deerslayer had hardly come to this determination, when the profound stillness of night and solitude was broken by a cry so startling, as to drive all recollection of the more melancholy call of the loon from the listener's mind. It was a shriek of agony, that came either from one of the female sex, or from a boy so young as not yet to have attained a manly voice. This appeal could not be mistaken. Heart rending terror — if not writhing agony — was in the sounds, and the anguish that had awakened them was as sudden as it was fearful. The young man released his hold of the rush, and dashed his paddle into the water; to do, he knew not what — to steer, he knew not whither. A very few moments, however, removed his indecision. The breaking of branches, the cracking of dried sticks, and the fall of feet were distinctly audible; the sounds appearing to approach the water though in a direction that led diagonally towards the shore, and a little farther north than the spot that Deerslayer had been ordered to keep near. Following this clue, the young man urged the canoe ahead, paying but little attention to the manner in which he might betray its presence. He had reached a part of the shore, where its immediate bank was tolerably high and quite steep. Men were evidently threshing through the bushes and trees on the summit of this bank, following the line of the shore, as if those who fled sought a favorable place for descending. Just at this instant five or six rifles flashed, and the opposite hills gave back, as usual, the sharp reports in prolonged rolling echoes. One or two shrieks, like those which escape the bravest when suddenly overcome by unexpected anguish and alarm, followed; and then the threshing among the bushes was renewed, in a way to show that man was grappling with man.

"Slippery devil!" shouted Hurry with the fury of disappointment—"his skin's greased! I sha'n't grapple! Take that for your cunning!"

The words were followed by the fall of some heavy object among the smaller trees that fringed the bank, appearing to Deerslayer as if his gigantic associate had hurled an enemy from him in this unceremonious manner. Again the flight and pursuit were renewed, and then the young man saw a human form break down the hill, and rush several yards into the water. At this critical moment the canoe was just near enough to the spot to allow this movement, which was accompanied by no little noise, to be seen, and feeling that there he must take in his companion, if anywhere, Deerslayer urged the canoe forward to the rescue. His paddle had not been raised twice, when the voice of Hurry was heard filling the air with imprecations, and he rolled on the narrow beach, literally loaded down with enemies. While prostrate, and almost smothered with his foes, the athletic frontiersman gave his loon-call, in a manner that would have excited laughter under circumstances less terrific. The figure in the water seemed suddenly to repent his own flight, and rushed to the shore to aid his companion, but was met and immediately overpowered by half a dozen fresh pursuers, who, just then, came leaping down the bank.

"Let up, you painted riptyles — let up!" cried Hurry, too hard pressed to be particular about the terms he used; "isn't it enough that I am withed like a saw-log that ye must choke too!"

This speech satisfied Deerslayer that his friends were prisoners, and that to land would be to share their fate. He was already within a hundred feet of the shore, when a few timely strokes of the paddle not only arrested his advance, but forced him off to six or eight times that distance from his enemies. Luckily for him, all of the Indians had dropped their rifles in the pursuit, or this retreat might not have been effected with impunity; though no one had noted the canoe in the first confusion of the melee.

“Keep off the land, lad,” called out Hutter; “the girls depend only on you, now; you will want all your caution to escape these savages. Keep off, and God prosper you, as you aid my children!”

There was little sympathy in general between Hutter and the young man, but the bodily and mental anguish with which this appeal was made served at the moment to conceal from the latter the former’s faults. He saw only the father in his sufferings, and resolved at once to give a pledge of fidelity to its interests, and to be faithful to his word.

“Put your heart at ease, Master Hutter,” he called out; “the gals shall be looked to, as well as the castle. The inimy has got the shore, ’tis no use to deny, but he hasn’t got the water. Providence has the charge of all, and no one can say what will come of it; but, if good-will can sarve you and your’n, depend on that much. My exper’ence is small, but my will is good.”

“Ay, ay, Deerslayer,” returned Hurry, in this stentorian voice, which was losing some of its heartiness, notwithstanding — “Ay, ay, Deerslayer. You mean well enough, but what can you do? You’re no great matter in the best of times, and such a person is not likely to turn out a miracle in the worst. If there’s one savage on this lake shore, there’s forty, and that’s an army you ar’n’t the man to overcome. The best way, in my judgment, will be to make a straight course to the castle; get the gals into the canoe, with a few eatables; then strike off for the corner of the lake where we came in, and take the best trail for the Mohawk. These devils won’t know where to look for you for some hours, and if they did, and went off hot in the pursuit, they must turn either the foot or the head of the lake to get at you. That’s my judgment in the matter; and if old Tom here wishes to make his last will and testament in a manner favorable to his darters, he’ll say the same.”

“Twill never do, young man,” rejoined Hutter. “The enemy has scouts out at this moment, looking for canoes, and you’ll be seen and taken. Trust to the castle; and above all things, keep clear of the land. Hold out a week, and parties from the garrisons will drive the savages off.”

“Twon’t be four-and-twenty hours, old fellow, afore these foxes will be rafting off to storm your castle,” interrupted Hurry, with more of the heat of argument than might be expected from a man who was bound and a captive, and about whom nothing could be called free but his opinions and his tongue. “Your advice has a stout sound, but it will have a fatal tarmination. If you or I was in the house, we might hold out a few days, but remember that this lad has never seen an inimy afore tonight, and is what you yourself called settlement-conscienced; though for my part, I think the consciences in the settlements pretty much the same as they are out here in the woods. These savages are making signs, Deerslayer, for me to encourage you to come ashore with the canoe; but that I’ll never do, as it’s ag’in reason and natur’. As for old Tom and myself, whether they’ll scalp us tonight, keep us for the torture by fire, or carry us to Canada, is more than any one knows but the devil that advises them how to act. I’ve such a big and bushy head that it’s quite likely they’ll indivor to get two scalps off it, for the bounty is a tempting thing, or old Tom and I wouldn’t be in this scrape. Ay — there they go with their signs ag’in, but if I advise you to land may they eat me as well as roast me. No, no, Deerslayer — do you keep off where you are, and after daylight, on no account come within two hundred yards —”

This injunction of Hurry’s was stopped by a hand being rudely slapped against his mouth, the certain sign that some one in the party sufficiently understood English to have at length detected the drift of his discourse. Immediately after, the whole group entered the forest, Hutter and Hurry apparently making no resistance to the movement. Just as the sounds of the cracking bushes were ceasing, however, the voice of the father was again heard.

“As you’re true to my children, God prosper you, young man!” were the words that reached Deerslayer’s ears; after which he found himself left to follow the dictates of his own discretion.

Several minutes elapsed, in death-like stillness, when the party on the shore had disappeared in the woods. Owing to the distance — rather more than two hundred yards — and the obscurity, Deerslayer had been able barely to distinguish the group, and to see it retiring; but even this dim connection with human forms gave an animation to the scene that was strongly in contrast to the absolute solitude that remained. Although the young man leaned forward to listen, holding his breath and condensing every faculty in the single sense of hearing, not another sound reached his ears to denote the vicinity of human beings. It seemed as if a silence that had never been broken reigned on the spot again; and, for an instant, even that piercing shriek, which had so lately broken the stillness of the forest, or the execrations of March, would have been a relief to the feeling of desertion to which it gave rise.

This paralysis of mind and body, however, could not last long in one constituted mentally and physically like Deerslayer. Dropping his paddle into the water, he turned the head of the canoe, and proceeded slowly, as one walks who thinks intently, towards the centre of the lake. When he believed himself to have reached a point in a line with that where

he had set the last canoe adrift, he changed his direction northward, keeping the light air as nearly on his back as possible. After paddling a quarter of a mile in this direction, a dark object became visible on the lake, a little to the right; and turning on one side for the purpose, he had soon secured his lost prize to his own boat. Deerslayer now examined the heavens, the course of the air, and the position of the two canoes. Finding nothing in either to induce a change of plan, he lay down, and prepared to catch a few hours' sleep, that the morrow might find him equal to its exigencies.

Although the hardy and the tired sleep profoundly, even in scenes of danger, it was some time before Deerslayer lost his recollection. His mind dwelt on what had passed, and his half-conscious faculties kept figuring the events of the night, in a sort of waking dream. Suddenly he was up and alert, for he fancied he heard the preconcerted signal of Hurry summoning him to the shore. But all was still as the grave again. The canoes were slowly drifting northward, the thoughtful stars were glimmering in their mild glory over his head, and the forest-bound sheet of water lay embedded between its mountains, as calm and melancholy as if never troubled by the winds, or brightened by a noonday sun. Once more the loon raised his tremulous cry, near the foot of the lake, and the mystery of the alarm was explained. Deerslayer adjusted his hard pillow, stretched his form in the bottom of the canoe, and slept.



## CHAPTER 7

*"Clear, placid Leman I Thy contrasted lake  
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing  
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake  
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.  
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing  
To waft me from distraction; once I loved  
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring  
Sounds sweet as if a sister's voice reproved,  
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved."*

—BYRON.

Day had fairly dawned before the young man, whom we have left in the situation described in the last chapter, again opened his eyes. This was no sooner done, than he started up, and looked about him with the eagerness of one who suddenly felt the importance of accurately ascertaining his precise position. His rest had been deep and undisturbed; and when he awoke, it was with a clearness of intellect and a readiness of resources that were very much needed at that particular moment. The sun had not risen, it is true, but the vault of heaven was rich with the winning softness that "brings and shuts the day," while the whole air was filled with the carols of birds, the hymns of the feathered tribe. These sounds first told Deerslayer the risks he ran. The air, for wind it could scarce be called, was still light, it is true, but it had increased a little in the course of the night, and as the canoes were feathers on the water, they had drifted twice the expected distance; and, what was still more dangerous, had approached so near the base of the mountain that here rose precipitously from the eastern shore, as to render the carols of the birds plainly audible. This was not the worst. The third canoe had taken the same direction, and was slowly drifting towards a point where it must inevitably touch, unless turned aside by a shift of wind, or human hands. In other respects, nothing presented itself to attract attention, or to awaken alarm. The castle stood on its shoal, nearly abreast of the canoes, for the drift had amounted to miles in the course of the night, and the ark lay fastened to its piles, as both had been left so many hours before.

As a matter of course, Deerslayer's attention was first given to the canoe ahead. It was already quite near the point, and a very few strokes of the paddle sufficed to tell him that it must touch before he could possibly overtake it. Just at this moment, too, the wind inopportunately freshened, rendering the drift of the light craft much more rapid than certain. Feeling the impossibility of preventing a contact with the land, the young man wisely determined not to heat himself with unnecessary exertions; but first looking to the priming of his piece, he proceeded slowly and warily towards the point, taking care to make a little circuit, that he might be exposed on only one side, as he approached.

The canoe adrift being directed by no such intelligence, pursued its proper way, and grounded on a small sunken rock, at the distance of three or four yards from the shore. Just at that moment, Deerslayer had got abreast of the point, and turned the bows of his own boat to the land; first casting loose his tow, that his movements might be unencumbered. The canoe hung an instant to the rock; then it rose a hair's breadth on an almost imperceptible swell of the water, swung round, floated clear, and reached the strand. All this the young man noted, but it neither quickened his pulses, nor hastened his hand. If any one had been lying in wait for the arrival of the waif, he must be seen, and the utmost caution in approaching the shore became indispensable; if no one was in ambush, hurry was unnecessary. The point being nearly diagonally opposite to the Indian encampment, he hoped the last, though the former was not only possible, but probable; for the savages were prompt in adopting all the expedients of their particular modes of warfare, and quite likely had many scouts searching the shores for craft to carry them off to the castle. As a glance at the lake from any height or projection would expose the smallest object on its surface, there was little hope that either of the canoes would pass unseen; and Indian sagacity needed no instruction to tell which way a boat or a log would drift, when the direction of the wind was known. As Deerslayer drew nearer and nearer to the land, the stroke of his paddle grew slower, his eye became more watchful, and his ears and nostrils almost dilated with the effort to detect any lurking danger. 'T was a trying moment for a novice, nor was there the encouragement which even the timid sometimes feel, when conscious of being observed and commended. He was entirely alone, thrown on his own resources, and was cheered by no friendly eye, emboldened by no encouraging voice. Notwithstanding all these circumstances, the most experienced veteran in forest warfare could not have behaved better. Equally free from recklessness and hesitation, his advance was marked by a sort of philosophical prudence that appeared to render him superior to all motives but those which were best calculated to effect his purpose. Such was the

commencement of a career in forest exploits, that afterwards rendered this man, in his way, and under the limits of his habits and opportunities, as renowned as many a hero whose name has adorned the pages of works more celebrated than legends simple as ours can ever become.

When about a hundred yards from the shore, Deerslayer rose in the canoe, gave three or four vigorous strokes with the paddle, sufficient of themselves to impel the bark to land, and then quickly laying aside the instrument of labor, he seized that of war. He was in the very act of raising the rifle, when a sharp report was followed by the buzz of a bullet that passed so near his body as to cause him involuntarily to start. The next instant Deerslayer staggered, and fell his whole length in the bottom of the canoe. A yell — it came from a single voice — followed, and an Indian leaped from the bushes upon the open area of the point, bounding towards the canoe. This was the moment the young man desired. He rose on the instant, and levelled his own rifle at his uncovered foe; but his finger hesitated about pulling the trigger on one whom he held at such a disadvantage. This little delay, probably, saved the life of the Indian, who bounded back into the cover as swiftly as he had broken out of it. In the meantime Deerslayer had been swiftly approaching the land, and his own canoe reached the point just as his enemy disappeared. As its movements had not been directed, it touched the shore a few yards from the other boat; and though the rifle of his foe had to be loaded, there was not time to secure his prize, and carry it beyond danger, before he would be exposed to another shot. Under the circumstances, therefore, he did not pause an instant, but dashed into the woods and sought a cover.

On the immediate point there was a small open area, partly in native grass, and partly beach, but a dense fringe of bushes lined its upper side. This narrow belt of dwarf vegetation passed, one issued immediately into the high and gloomy vaults of the forest. The land was tolerably level for a few hundred feet, and then it rose precipitously in a mountainside. The trees were tall, large, and so free from underbrush, that they resembled vast columns, irregularly scattered, upholding a dome of leaves. Although they stood tolerably close together, for their ages and size, the eye could penetrate to considerable distances; and bodies of men, even, might have engaged beneath their cover, with concert and intelligence.

Deerslayer knew that his adversary must be employed in reloading, unless he had fled. The former proved to be the case, for the young man had no sooner placed himself behind a tree, than he caught a glimpse of the arm of the Indian, his body being concealed by an oak, in the very act of forcing the leathered bullet home. Nothing would have been easier than to spring forward, and decide the affair by a close assault on his unprepared foe; but every feeling of Deerslayer revolted at such a step, although his own life had just been attempted from a cover. He was yet unpracticed in the ruthless expedients of savage warfare, of which he knew nothing except by tradition and theory, and it struck him as unfair advantage to assail an unarmed foe. His color had heightened, his eye frowned, his lips were compressed, and all his energies were collected and ready; but, instead of advancing to fire, he dropped his rifle to the usual position of a sportsman in readiness to catch his aim, and muttered to himself, unconscious that he was speaking —

“No, no — that may be red-skin warfare, but it’s not a Christian’s gifts. Let the miscreant charge, and then we’ll take it out like men; for the canoe he must not, and shall not have. No, no; let him have time to load, and God will take care of the right!”

All this time the Indian had been so intent on his own movements, that he was even ignorant that his enemy was in the woods. His only apprehension was, that the canoe would be recovered and carried away before he might be in readiness to prevent it. He had sought the cover from habit, but was within a few feet of the fringe of bushes, and could be at the margin of the forest in readiness to fire in a moment. The distance between him and his enemy was about fifty yards, and the trees were so arranged by nature that the line of sight was not interrupted, except by the particular trees behind which each party stood.

His rifle was no sooner loaded, than the savage glanced around him, and advanced incautiously as regarded the real, but stealthily as respected the fancied position of his enemy, until he was fairly exposed. Then Deerslayer stepped from behind its own cover, and hailed him.

“This a way, red-skin; this a way, if you’re looking for me,” he called out. “I’m young in war, but not so young as to stand on an open beach to be shot down like an owl, by daylight. It rests on yourself whether it’s peace or war atween us; for my gifts are white gifts, and I’m not one of them that thinks it valiant to slay human mortals, singly, in the woods.”

The savage was a good deal startled by this sudden discovery of the danger he ran. He had a little knowledge of English, however, and caught the drift of the other’s meaning. He was also too well schooled to betray alarm, but, dropping

the butt of his rifle to the earth, with an air of confidence, he made a gesture of lofty courtesy. All this was done with the ease and self-possession of one accustomed to consider no man his superior. In the midst of this consummate acting, however, the volcano that raged within caused his eyes to glare, and his nostrils to dilate, like those of some wild beast that is suddenly prevented from taking the fatal leap.

"Two canoes," he said, in the deep guttural tones of his race, holding up the number of fingers he mentioned, by way of preventing mistakes; "one for you — one for me."

"No, no, Mingo, that will never do. You own neither; and neither shall you have, as long as I can prevent it. I know it's war atween your people and mine, but that's no reason why human mortals should slay each other, like savage creatures that meet in the woods; go your way, then, and leave me to go mine. The world is large enough for us both; and when we meet fairly in battle, why, the Lord will order the fate of each of us."

"Good!" exclaimed the Indian; "my brother missionary — great talk; all about Manitou."

"Not so — not so, warrior. I'm not good enough for the Moravians, and am too good for most of the other vagabonds that preach about in the woods. No, no; I'm only a hunter, as yet, though afore the peace is made, 'tis like enough there'll be occasion to strike a blow at some of your people. Still, I wish it to be done in fair fight, and not in a quarrel about the ownership of a miserable canoe."

"Good! My brother very young — but he is very wise. Little warrior — great talker. Chief, sometimes, in council."

"I don't know this, nor do I say it, Injin," returned Deerslayer, coloring a little at the ill-concealed sarcasm of the other's manner; "I look forward to a life in the woods, and I only hope it may be a peaceable one. All young men must go on the war-path, when there's occasion, but war isn't needfully massacre. I've seen enough of the last, this very night, to know that Providence frowns on it; and I now invite you to go your own way, while I go mine; and hope that we may part friends."

"Good! My brother has two scalp — gray hair under 'other. Old wisdom — young tongue."

Here the savage advanced with confidence, his hand extended, his face smiling, and his whole bearing denoting amity and respect. Deerslayer met his offered friendship in a proper spirit, and they shook hands cordially, each endeavoring to assure the other of his sincerity and desire to be at peace.

"All have his own," said the Indian; "my canoe, mine; your canoe, your'n. Go look; if your'n, you keep; if mine, I keep."

"That's just, red-skin; thought you must be wrong in thinking the canoe your property. Howsever, seein' is believin', and we'll go down to the shore, where you may look with your own eyes; for it's likely you'll object to trustin' altogether to mine."

The Indian uttered his favorite exclamation of "Good!" and then they walked side by side, towards the shore. There was no apparent distrust in the manner of either, the Indian moving in advance, as if he wished to show his companion that he did not fear turning his back to him. As they reached the open ground, the former pointed towards Deerslayer's boat, and said emphatically — "No mine — pale-face canoe. This red man's. No want other man's canoe — want his own."

"You're wrong, red-skin, you 're altogether wrong. This canoe was left in old Hutter's keeping, and is his'n according to law, red or white, till its owner comes to claim it. Here's the seats and the stitching of the bark to speak for themselves. No man ever know'd an Injin to turn off such work."

"Good! My brother little old — big wisdom. Injin no make him. White man's work."

"I'm glad you think so, for holding out to the contrary might have made ill blood atween us, every one having a right to take possession of his own. I'll just shove the canoe out of reach of dispute at once, as the quickest way of settling difficulties."

While Deerslayer was speaking, he put a foot against the end of the light boat, and giving a vigorous shove, he sent it out into the lake a hundred feet or more, where, taking the true current, it would necessarily float past the point, and be in no further danger of coming ashore. The savage started at this ready and decided expedient, and his companion saw that he cast a hurried and fierce glance at his own canoe, or that which contained the paddles. The change of manner, however, was but momentary, and then the Iroquois resumed his air of friendliness, and a smile of satisfaction.

"Good!" he repeated, with stronger emphasis than ever. "Young head, old mind. Know how to settle quarrel. Farewell, brother. He go to house in water-muskrat house — Injin go to camp; tell chiefs no find canoe."

Deerslayer was not sorry to hear this proposal, for he felt anxious to join the females, and he took the offered hand of



the Indian very willingly. The parting words were friendly, and while the red man walked calmly towards the wood, with the rifle in the hollow of his arm, without once looking back in uneasiness or distrust, the white man moved towards the remaining canoe, carrying his piece in the same pacific manner, it is true, but keeping his eye fastened on the movements of the other. This distrust, however, seemed to be altogether uncalled for, and as if ashamed to have entertained it, the young man averted his look, and stepped carelessly up to his boat. Here he began to push the canoe from the shore, and to make his other preparations for departing. He might have been thus employed a minute, when, happening to turn his face towards the land, his quick and certain eye told him, at a glance, the imminent jeopardy in which his life was placed. The black, ferocious eyes of the savage were glancing on him, like those of the crouching tiger, through a small opening in the bushes, and the muzzle of his rifle seemed already to be opening in a line with his own body.

Then, indeed, the long practice of Deerslayer, as a hunter did him good service. Accustomed to fire with the deer on the bound, and often when the precise position of the animal's body had in a manner to be guessed at, he used the same expedients here. To cock and poise his rifle were the acts of a single moment and a single motion: then aiming almost without sighting, he fired into the bushes where he knew a body ought to be, in order to sustain the appalling countenance which alone was visible. There was not time to raise the piece any higher, or to take a more deliberate aim. So rapid were his movements that both parties discharged their pieces at the same instant, the concussions mingling in one report. The mountains, indeed, gave back but a single echo. Deerslayer dropped his piece, and stood with head erect, steady as one of the pines in the calm of a June morning, watching the result; while the savage gave the yell that has become historical for its appalling influence, leaped through the bushes, and came bounding across the open ground, flourishing a tomahawk. Still Deerslayer moved not, but stood with his unloaded rifle fallen against his shoulders, while, with a hunter's habits, his hands were mechanically feeling for the powder-horn and charger. When about forty feet from his enemy, the savage hurled his keen weapon; but it was with an eye so vacant, and a hand so unsteady and feeble, that the young man caught it by the handle as it was flying past him. At that instant the Indian staggered and fell his whole length on the ground.

"I know'd it — I know'd it!" exclaimed Deerslayer, who was already preparing to force a fresh bullet into his rifle; "I know'd it must come to this, as soon as I had got the range from the creatur's eyes. A man sights suddenly, and fires quick when his own life's in danger; yes, I know'd it would come to this. I was about the hundredth part of a second too quick for him, or it might have been bad for me! The riptyle's bullet has just grazed my side — but say what you will for or ag'in 'em, a red-skin is by no means as sartain with powder and ball as a white man. Their gifts don't seem to lie that a way. Even Chingachgook, great as he is in other matters, isn't downright deadly with the rifle."

By this time the piece was reloaded, and Deerslayer, after tossing the tomahawk into the canoe, advanced to his victim, and stood over him, leaning on his rifle, in melancholy attention. It was the first instance in which he had seen a man fall in battle — it was the first fellow-creature against whom he had ever seriously raised his own hand. The sensations were novel; and regret, with the freshness of our better feelings, mingled with his triumph. The Indian was not dead, though shot directly through the body. He lay on his back motionless, but his eyes, now full of consciousness, watched each action of his victor — as the fallen bird regards the fowler — jealous of every movement. The man probably expected the fatal blow which was to precede the loss of his scalp; or perhaps he anticipated that this latter act of cruelty would precede his death. Deerslayer read his thoughts; and he found a melancholy satisfaction in relieving the apprehensions of the helpless savage.

"No, no, red-skin," he said; "you've nothing more to fear from me. I am of a Christian stock, and scalping is not of my gifts. I'll just make sartain of your rifle, and then come back and do you what sarvice I can. Though here I can't stay much longer, as the crack of three rifles will be apt to bring some of your devils down upon me."

The close of this was said in a sort of a soliloquy, as the young man went in quest of the fallen rifle. The piece was found where its owner had dropped it, and was immediately put into the canoe. Laying his own rifle at its side, Deerslayer then returned and stood over the Indian again.

"All inimity atween you and me's at an ind red-skin," he said; "and you may set your heart at rest on the score of the scalp, or any further injury. My gifts are white, as I've told you; and I hope my conduct will be white also."

Could looks have conveyed all they meant, it is probable Deerslayer's innocent vanity on the subject of color would have been rebuked a little; but he comprehended the gratitude that was expressed in the eyes of the dying savage, without in the least detecting the bitter sarcasm that struggled with the better feeling.

"Water!" ejaculated the thirsty and unfortunate creature; "give poor Injin water."

“Ay, water you shall have, if you drink the lake dry. I’ll just carry you down to it that you may take your fill. This is the way, they tell me, with all wounded people — water is their greatest comfort and delight.”

So saying, Deerslayer raised the Indian in his arms, and carried him to the lake. Here he first helped him to take an attitude in which he could appease his burning thirst; after which he seated himself on a stone, and took the head of his wounded adversary in his own lap, and endeavored to soothe his anguish in the best manner he could.

“It would be sinful in me to tell you your time hadn’t come, warrior,” he commenced, “and therefore I’ll not say it. You’ve passed the middle age already, and, considerin’ the sort of lives ye lead, your days have been pretty well filled. The principal thing now, is to look forward to what comes next. Neither red-skin nor pale-face, on the whole, calculates much on sleepin’ forever; but both expect to live in another world. Each has his gifts, and will be judged by ’em, and I suppose you’ve thought these matters over enough not to stand in need of sarmons when the trial comes. You’ll find your happy hunting-grounds, if you’ve been a just Injin; if an onjust, you’ll meet your desarts in another way. I’ve my own idees about these things; but you’re too old and exper’enced to need any explanations from one as young as I.”

“Good!” ejaculated the Indian, whose voice retained its depth even as life ebbed away; “young head — old wisdom!”

“It’s sometimes a consolation, when the ind comes, to know that them we’ve harmed, or tried to harm, forgive us. I suppose natur’ seeks this relief, by way of getting a pardon on ’arth; as we never can know whether He pardons, who is all in all, till judgment itself comes. It’s soothing to know that any pardon at such times; and that, I conclude, is the secret. Now, as for myself, I overlook altogether your designs ag’in my life; first, because no harm came of ’em; next, because it’s your gifts, and natur’, and trainin’, and I ought not to have trusted you at all; and, finally and chiefly, because I can bear no ill-will to a dying man, whether heathen or Christian. So put your heart at ease, so far as I’m consarned; you know best what other matters ought to trouble you, or what ought to give you satisfaction in so trying a moment.”

It is probable that the Indian had some of the fearful glimpses of the unknown state of being which God, in mercy, seems at times to afford to all the human race; but they were necessarily in conformity with his habits and prejudices. Like most of his people, and like too many of our own, he thought more of dying in a way to gain applause among those he left than to secure a better state of existence hereafter. While Deerslayer was speaking, his mind was a little bewildered, though he felt that the intention was good; and when he had done, a regret passed over his spirit that none of his own tribe were present to witness his stoicism, under extreme bodily suffering, and the firmness with which he met his end. With the high innate courtesy that so often distinguishes the Indian warrior before he becomes corrupted by too much intercourse with the worst class of the white men, he endeavored to express his thankfulness for the other’s good intentions, and to let him understand that they were appreciated.

“Good!” he repeated, for this was an English word much used by the savages, “good! young head; young heart, too. Old heart tough; no shed tear. Hear Indian when he die, and no want to lie — what he call him?”

“Deerslayer is the name I bear now, though the Delawares have said that when I get back from this war-path, I shall have a more manly title, provided I can ’arn one.”

“That good name for boy — poor name for warrior. He get better quick. No fear there,” — the savage had strength sufficient, under the strong excitement he felt, to raise a hand and tap the young man on his breast — “eye sartain — finger lightning — aim, death — great warrior soon. No Deerslayer — Hawkeye — Hawkeye — Hawkeye. Shake hand.”

Deerslayer — or Hawkeye, as the youth was then first named, for in after years he bore the appellation throughout all that region — Deerslayer took the hand of the savage, whose last breath was drawn in that attitude, gazing in admiration at the countenance of a stranger, who had shown so much readiness, skill, and firmness, in a scene that was equally trying and novel. When the reader remembers it is the highest gratification an Indian can receive to see his enemy betray weakness, he will be better able to appreciate the conduct which had extorted so great a concession at such a moment.

“His spirit has fled!” said Deerslayer, in a suppressed, melancholy voice. “Ah’s me! Well, to this we must all come, sooner or later; and he is happiest, let his skin be what color it may, who is best fitted to meet it. Here lies the body of no doubt a brave warrior, and the soul is already flying towards its heaven or hell, whether that be a happy hunting ground, a place scant of game, regions of glory, according to Moravian doctrine, or flames of fire! So it happens, too, as regards other matters! Here have old Hutter and Hurry Harry got themselves into difficulty, if they haven’t got themselves into torment and death, and all for a bounty that luck offers to me in what many would think a lawful and suitable manner. But not a farthing of such money shall cross my hand. White I was born, and white will I die; clinging to color to the last, even

though the King's majesty, his governors, and all his councils, both at home and in the colonies, forget from what they come, and where they hope to go, and all for a little advantage in warfare. No, no, warrior, hand of mine shall never molest your scalp, and so your soul may rest in peace on the p'int of making a decent appearance when the body comes to join it, in your own land of spirits."

Deerslayer arose as soon as he had spoken. Then he placed the body of the dead man in a sitting posture, with its back against the little rock, taking the necessary care to prevent it from falling or in any way settling into an attitude that might be thought unseemly by the sensitive, though wild notions of a savage. When this duty was performed, the young man stood gazing at the grim countenance of his fallen foe, in a sort of melancholy abstraction. As was his practice, however, a habit gained by living so much alone in the forest, he then began again to give utterance to his thoughts and feelings aloud.

"I didn't wish your life, red-skin," he said "but you left me no choice atween killing or being killed. Each party acted according to his gifts, I suppose, and blame can light on neither. You were treacherous, according to your natur' in war, and I was a little oversightful, as I'm apt to be in trusting others. Well, this is my first battle with a human mortal, though it's not likely to be the last. I have foun't most of the creatur's of the forest, such as bears, wolves, painters, and catamounts, but this is the beginning with the red-skins. If I was Injin born, now, I might tell of this, or carry in the scalp, and boast of the expl'ite afore the whole tribe; or, if my inimy had only been even a bear, 'twould have been nat'ral and proper to let everybody know what had happened; but I don't well see how I'm to let even Chingachgook into this secret, so long as it can be done only by boasting with a white tongue. And why should I wish to boast of it a'ter all? It's slaying a human, although he was a savage; and how do I know that he was a just Injin; and that he has not been taken away suddenly to anything but happy hunting-grounds. When it's onsartain whether good or evil has been done, the wisest way is not to be boastful — still, I should like Chingachgook to know that I haven't discredited the Delawares, or my training!"

Part of this was uttered aloud, while part was merely muttered between the speaker's teeth; his more confident opinions enjoying the first advantage, while his doubts were expressed in the latter mode. Soliloquy and reflection received a startling interruption, however, by the sudden appearance of a second Indian on the lake shore, a few hundred yards from the point. This man, evidently another scout, who had probably been drawn to the place by the reports of the rifles, broke out of the forest with so little caution that Deerslayer caught a view of his person before he was himself discovered. When the latter event did occur, as was the case a moment later, the savage gave a loud yell, which was answered by a dozen voices from different parts of the mountainside. There was no longer any time for delay; in another minute the boat was quitting the shore under long and steady sweeps of the paddle.

As soon as Deerslayer believed himself to be at a safe distance he ceased his efforts, permitting the little bark to drift, while he leisurely took a survey of the state of things. The canoe first sent adrift was floating before the air, quite a quarter of a mile above him, and a little nearer to the shore than he wished, now that he knew more of the savages were so near at hand. The canoe shoved from the point was within a few yards of him, he having directed his own course towards it on quitting the land. The dead Indian lay in grim quiet where he had left him, the warrior who had shown himself from the forest had already vanished, and the woods themselves were as silent and seemingly deserted as the day they came fresh from the hands of their great Creator. This profound stillness, however, lasted but a moment. When time had been given to the scouts of the enemy to reconnoitre, they burst out of the thicket upon the naked point, filling the air with yells of fury at discovering the death of their companion. These cries were immediately succeeded by shouts of delight when they reached the body and clustered eagerly around it. Deerslayer was a sufficient adept in the usages of the natives to understand the reason of the change. The yell was the customary lamentation at the loss of a warrior, the shout a sign of rejoicing that the conqueror had not been able to secure the scalp; the trophy, without which a victory is never considered complete. The distance at which the canoes lay probably prevented any attempts to injure the conqueror, the American Indian, like the panther of his own woods, seldom making any effort against his foe unless tolerably certain it is under circumstances that may be expected to prove effective.

As the young man had no longer any motive to remain near the point, he prepared to collect his canoes, in order to tow them off to the castle. That nearest was soon in tow, when he proceeded in quest of the other, which was all this time floating up the lake. The eye of Deerslayer was no sooner fastened on this last boat, than it struck him that it was nearer to the shore than it would have been had it merely followed the course of the gentle current of air. He began to suspect the influence of some unseen current in the water, and he quickened his exertions, in order to regain possession of it before it could drift into a dangerous proximity to the woods. On getting nearer, he thought that the canoe had a perceptible motion

through the water, and, as it lay broadside to the air, that this motion was taking it towards the land. A few vigorous strokes of the paddle carried him still nearer, when the mystery was explained. Something was evidently in motion on the off side of the canoe, or that which was farthest from himself, and closer scrutiny showed that it was a naked human arm. An Indian was lying in the bottom of the canoe, and was propelling it slowly but certainly to the shore, using his hand as a paddle. Deerslayer understood the whole artifice at a glance. A savage had swum off to the boat while he was occupied with his enemy on the point, got possession, and was using these means to urge it to the shore.

Satisfied that the man in the canoe could have no arms, Deerslayer did not hesitate to dash close alongside of the retiring boat, without deeming it necessary to raise his own rifle. As soon as the wash of the water, which he made in approaching, became audible to the prostrate savage, the latter sprang to his feet, and uttered an exclamation that proved how completely he was taken by surprise.

"If you've enjoy'd yourself enough in that canoe, red-skin," Deerslayer coolly observed, stopping his own career in sufficient time to prevent an absolute collision between the two boats — "if you've enjoy'd yourself enough in that canoe, you'll do a prudent act by taking to the lake ag'in. I'm reasonable in these matters, and don't crave your blood, though there's them about that would look upon you more as a due-bill for the bounty than a human mortal. Take to the lake this minute, afore we get to hot words."

The savage was one of those who did not understand a word of English, and he was indebted to the gestures of Deerslayer, and to the expression of an eye that did not often deceive, for an imperfect comprehension of his meaning. Perhaps, too, the sight of the rifle that lay so near the hand of the white man quickened his decision. At all events, he crouched like a tiger about to take his leap, uttered a yell, and the next instant his naked body disappeared in the water. When he rose to take breath, it was at the distance of several yards from the canoe, and the hasty glance he threw behind him denoted how much he feared the arrival of a fatal messenger from the rifle of his foe. But the young man made no indication of any hostile intention. Deliberately securing the canoe to the others, he began to paddle from the shore; and by the time the Indian reached the land, and had shaken himself, like a spaniel, on quitting the water, his dreaded enemy was already beyond rifle-shot on his way to the castle. As was so much his practice, Deerslayer did not fail to soliloquize on what had just occurred, while steadily pursuing his course towards the point of destination. "Well, well," — he commenced — "'twould have been wrong to kill a human mortal without an object. Scalps are of no account with me, and life is sweet, and ought not to be taken marcellously by them that have white gifts. The savage was a Mingo, it's true; and I make no doubt he is, and will be as long as he lives, a ra'al riptyle and vagabond; but that's no reason I should forget my gifts and color. No, no — let him go; if ever we meet ag'in, rifle in hand, why then 'twill be seen which has the stoutest heart and the quickest eye. Hawkeye! That's not a bad name for a warrior, sounding much more manful and valiant than Deerslayer! 'Twouldn't be a bad title to begin with, and it has been fairly 'arned. If 't was Chingachgook, now, he might go home and boast of his deeds, and the chiefs would name him Hawkeye in a minute; but it don't become white blood to brag, and 't isn't easy to see how the matter can be known unless I do. Well, well — everything is in the hands of Providence; this affair as well as another; I'll trust to that for getting my desarts in all things." Having thus betrayed what might be termed his weak spot, the young man continued to paddle in silence, making his way diligently, and as fast as his tows would allow him, towards the castle. By this time the sun had not only risen, but it had appeared over the eastern mountains, and was shedding a flood of glorious light on this as yet unchristened sheet of water. The whole scene was radiant with beauty; and no one unaccustomed to the ordinary history of the woods would fancy it had so lately witnessed incidents so ruthless and barbarous. As he approached the building of old Hutter, Deerslayer thought, or rather felt that its appearance was in singular harmony with all the rest of the scene. Although nothing had been consulted but strength and security, the rude, massive logs, covered with their rough bark, the projecting roof, and the form, would contribute to render the building picturesque in almost any situation, while its actual position added novelty and piquancy to its other points of interest. When Deerslayer drew nearer to the castle, however, objects of interest presented themselves that at once eclipsed any beauties that might have distinguished the scenery of the lake, and the site of the singular edifice. Judith and Hetty stood on the platform before the door, Hurry's dooryard awaiting his approach with manifest anxiety; the former, from time to time, taking a survey of his person and of the canoes through the old ship's spyglass that has been already mentioned. Never probably did this girl seem more brilliantly beautiful than at that moment; the flush of anxiety and alarm increasing her color to its richest tints, while the softness of her eyes, a charm that even poor Hetty shared with her, was deepened by intense concern. Such, at least, without pausing or pretending to analyze motives, or to draw any other very nice distinction between cause and effect, were the opinions of the young man as his canoes reached the side of the ark, where he carefully fastened all three before he put his foot on the platform.

## CHAPTER 8

*"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;  
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;  
His tears pure messengers sent from his heart;  
His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth."*

—TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, II.VII, 75–78

Neither of the girls spoke as Deerslayer stood before them alone, his countenance betraying all the apprehension he felt on account of two absent members of their party.

"Father!" Judith at length exclaimed, succeeding in uttering the word, as it might be by a desperate effort.

"He's met with misfortune, and there's no use in concealing it," answered Deerslayer, in his direct and simple minded manner. "He and Hurry are in Mingo hands, and Heaven only knows what's to be the tarmination. I've got the canoes safe, and that's a consolation, since the vagabonds will have to swim for it, or raft off, to come near this place. At sunset we'll be reinforced by Chingachgook, if I can manage to get him into a canoe; and then, I think, we two can answer for the ark and the castle, till some of the officers in the garrisons hear of this war-path, which sooner or later must be the case, when we may look for succor from that quarter, if from no other."

"The officers!" exclaimed Judith, impatiently, her color deepening, and her eye expressing a lively but passing emotion. "Who thinks or speaks of the heartless gallants now? We are sufficient of ourselves to defend the castle. But what of my father, and of poor Hurry Harry?"

"T is natural you should feel this consarn for your own parent, Judith, and I suppose it's equally so that you should feel it for Hurry Harry, too."

Deerslayer then commenced a succinct but clear narrative of all that occurred during the night, in no manner concealing what had befallen his two companions, or his own opinion of what might prove to be the consequences. The girls listened with profound attention, but neither betrayed that feminine apprehension and concern which would have followed such a communication when made to those who were less accustomed to the hazards and accidents of a frontier life. To the surprise of Deerslayer, Judith seemed the most distressed, Hetty listening eagerly, but appearing to brood over the facts in melancholy silence, rather than betraying any outward signs of feeling. The former's agitation, the young man did not fail to attribute to the interest she felt in Hurry, quite as much as to her filial love, while Hetty's apparent indifference was ascribed to that mental darkness which, in a measure, obscured her intellect, and which possibly prevented her from foreseeing all the consequences. Little was said, however, by either, Judith and her sister busying themselves in making the preparations for the morning meal, as they who habitually attend to such matters toil on mechanically even in the midst of suffering and sorrow. The plain but nutritious breakfast was taken by all three in sombre silence. The girls ate little, but Deerslayer gave proof of possessing one material requisite of a good soldier, that of preserving his appetite in the midst of the most alarming and embarrassing circumstances. The meal was nearly ended before a syllable was uttered; then, however, Judith spoke in the convulsive and hurried manner in which feeling breaks through restraint, after the latter has become more painful than even the betrayal of emotion.

"Father would have relished this fish," she exclaimed; "he says the salmon of the lakes is almost as good as the salmon of the sea."

"Your father has been acquainted with the sea, they tell me, Judith," returned the young man, who could not forbear throwing a glance of inquiry at the girl; for in common with all who knew Hutter, he had some curiosity on the subject of his early history. "Hurry Harry tells me he was once a sailor."

Judith first looked perplexed; then, influenced by feelings that were novel to her, in more ways than one, she became suddenly communicative, and seemingly much interested in the discourse.

"If Hurry knows anything of father's history, I would he had told it to me!" she cried. "Sometimes I think, too, he was once a sailor, and then again I think he was not. If that chest were open, or if it could speak, it might let us into his whole history. But its fastenings are too strong to be broken like pack thread."

Deerslayer turned to the chest in question, and for the first time examined it closely. Although discolored, and bearing proofs of having received much ill-treatment, he saw that it was of materials and workmanship altogether superior to

anything of the same sort he had ever before beheld. The wood was dark, rich, and had once been highly polished, though the treatment it had received left little gloss on its surface, and various scratches and indentations proved the rough collisions that it had encountered with substances still harder than itself. The corners were firmly bound with steel, elaborately and richly wrought, while the locks, of which it had no less than three, and the hinges, were of a fashion and workmanship that would have attracted attention even in a warehouse of curious furniture. This chest was quite large; and when Deerslayer arose, and endeavored to raise an end by its massive handle, he found that the weight fully corresponded with the external appearance.

"Did you never see that chest opened, Judith?" the young man demanded with frontier freedom, for delicacy on such subjects was little felt among the people on the verge of civilization, in that age, even if it be today.

"Never. Father has never opened it in my presence, if he ever opens it at all. No one here has ever seen its lid raised, unless it be father; nor do I even know that he has ever seen it."

"Now you're wrong, Judith," Hetty quietly answered. "Father has raised the lid, and I've seen him do it."

A feeling of manliness kept the mouth of Deerslayer shut; for, while he would not have hesitated about going far beyond what would be thought the bounds of propriety, in questioning the older sister, he had just scruples about taking what might be thought an advantage of the feeble intellect of the younger. Judith, being under no such restraint, however, turned quickly to the last speaker and continued the discourse.

"When and where did you ever see that chest opened, Hetty?"

"Here, and again and again. Father often opens it when you are away, though he don't in the least mind my being by, and seeing all he does, as well as hearing all he says."

"And what is it that he does, and what does he say?"

"That I cannot tell you, Judith," returned the other in a low but resolute voice. "Father's secrets are not my secrets."

"Secrets! This is stranger still, Deerslayer, that father should tell them to Hetty, and not tell them to me!"

"There's a good reason for that, Judith, though you're not to know it. Father's not here to answer for himself, and I'll say no more about it."

Judith and Deerslayer looked surprised, and for a minute the first seemed pained. But, suddenly recollecting herself, she turned away from her sister, as if in pity for her weakness and addressed the young man.

"You've told but half your story," she said, "breaking off at the place where you went to sleep in the canoe — or rather where you rose to listen to the cry of the loon. We heard the call of the loons, too, and thought their cries might bring a storm, though we are little used to tempests on this lake at this season of the year."

"The winds blow and the tempests howl as God pleases; sometimes at one season, and sometimes at another," answered Deerslayer; "and the loons speak accordin' to their natur'. Better would it be if men were as honest and frank. After I rose to listen to the birds, finding it could not be Hurry's signal, I lay down and slept. When the day dawned I was up and stirring, as usual, and then I went in chase of the two canoes, lest the Mingos should lay hands on 'em."

"You have not told us all, Deerslayer," said Judith earnestly. "We heard rifles under the eastern mountain; the echoes were full and long, and came so soon after the reports, that the pieces must have been fired on or quite near to the shore. Our ears are used to these signs, and are not to be deceived."

"They've done their duty, gal, this time; yes, they've done their duty. Rifles have been sighted this morning, ay, and triggers pulled, too, though not as often as they might have been. One warrior has gone to his happy hunting-grounds, and that's the whole of it. A man of white blood and white gifts is not to be expected to boast of his expl'ites and to flourish scalps."

Judith listened almost breathlessly; and when Deerslayer, in his quiet, modest manner, seemed disposed to quit the subject, she rose, and crossing the room, took a seat by his side. The manner of the girl had nothing forward about it, though it betrayed the quick instinct of a female's affection, and the sympathizing kindness of a woman's heart. She even took the hard hand of the hunter, and pressed it in both her own, unconsciously to herself, perhaps, while she looked earnestly and even reproachfully into his sun burnt face.

"You have been fighting the savages, Deerslayer, singly and by yourself!" she said. "In your wish to take care of us — of Hetty — of me, perhaps, you've fought the enemy bravely, with no eye to encourage your deeds, or to witness your fall,

had it pleased Providence to suffer so great a calamity!"

"I've fou't, Judith; yes, I have fou't the inimy, and that too, for the first time in my life. These things must be, and they bring with 'em a mixed feelin' of sorrow and triumph. Human natur' is a fightin' natur', I suppose, as all nations kill in battle, and we must be true to our rights and gifts. What has yet been done is no great matter, but should Chingachgook come to the rock this evening, as is agreed atween us, and I get him off it unbeknown to the savages or, if known to them, ag'in their wishes and designs, then may we all look to something like warfare, afore the Mingos shall get possession of either the castle, or the ark, or yourselves."

"Who is this Chingachgook; from what place does he come, and why does he come here?"

"The questions are nat'ral and right, I suppose, though the youth has a great name, already, in his own part of the country. Chingachgook is a Mohican by blood, consorting with the Delawares by usage, as is the case with most of his tribe, which has long been broken up by the increase of our color. He is of the family of the great chiefs; Uncas, his father, having been the considerablist warrior and counsellor of his people. Even old Tamenund honors Chingachgook, though he is thought to be yet too young to lead in war; and then the nation is so dispersed and diminished, that chieftainship among 'em has got to be little more than a name.

"Well, this war having commenced in 'arnest, the Delaware and I rendezvous'd an app'intment, to meet this evening at sunset on the rendezvous-rock at the foot of this very lake, intending to come out on our first hostile expedition ag'in the Mingos. Why we come exactly this a way is our own secret; but thoughtful young men on the war-path, as you may suppose, do nothing without a calculation and a design."

"A Delaware can have no unfriendly intentions towards us," said Judith, after a moment's hesitation, "and we know you to be friendly."

"Treachery is the last crime I hope to be accused of," returned Deerslayer, hurt at the gleam of distrust that had shot through Judith's mind; "and least of all, treachery to my own color."

"No one suspects you, Deerslayer," the girl impetuously cried. "No — no — your honest countenance would be sufficient surety for the truth of a thousand hearts! If all men had as honest tongues, and no more promised what they did not mean to perform, there would be less wrong done in the world, and fine feathers and scarlet cloaks would not be excuses for baseness and deception."

The girl spoke with strong, nay, even with convulsed feeling, and her fine eyes, usually so soft and alluring, flashed fire as she concluded. Deerslayer could not but observe this extraordinary emotion; but with the tact of a courtier, he avoided not only any allusion to the circumstance, but succeeded in concealing the effect of his discovery on himself. Judith gradually grew calm again, and as she was obviously anxious to appear to advantage in the eyes of the young man, she was soon able to renew the conversation as composedly as if nothing had occurred to disturb her.

"I have no right to look into your secrets, or the secrets of your friend, Deerslayer," she continued, "and am ready to take all you say on trust. If we can really get another male ally to join us at this trying moment, it will aid us much; and I am not without hope that when the savages find that we are able to keep the lake, they will offer to give up their prisoners in exchange for skins, or at least for the keg of powder that we have in the house."

The young man had the words "scalps" and "bounty" on his lips, but a reluctance to alarm the feelings of the daughters prevented him from making the allusion he had intended to the probable fate of their father. Still, so little was he practised in the arts of deception, that his expressive countenance was, of itself, understood by the quick-witted Judith, whose intelligence had been sharpened by the risks and habits of her life.

"I understand what you mean," she continued, hurriedly, "and what you would say, but for the fear of hurting me — us, I mean; for Hetty loves her father quite as well as I do. But this is not as we think of Indians. They never scalp an unhurt prisoner, but would rather take him away alive, unless, indeed, the fierce wish for torturing should get the mastery of them. I fear nothing for my father's scalp, and little for his life. Could they steal on us in the night, we should all probably suffer in this way; but men taken in open strife are seldom injured; not, at least, until the time of torture comes."

"That's tradition, I'll allow, and it's accordin' to practice — but, Judith, do you know the arr'nd on which your father and Hurry went ag'in the savages?"

"I do; and a cruel errand it was! But what will you have? Men will be men, and some even that flaunt in their gold and silver, and carry the King's commission in their pockets, are not guiltless of equal cruelty." Judith's eye again flashed, but

by a desperate struggle she resumed her composure. "I get warm when I think of all the wrong that men do," she added, affecting to smile, an effort in which she only succeeded indifferently well. "All this is silly. What is done is done, and it cannot be mended by complaints. But the Indians think so little of the shedding of blood, and value men so much for the boldness of their undertakings, that, did they know the business on which their prisoners came, they would be more likely to honor than to injure them for it."

"For a time, Judith; yes, I allow that, for a time. But when that feelin' dies away, then will come the love of revenge. We must indivor — Chingachgook and I — we must indivor to see what we can do to get Hurry and your father free; for the Mingos will no doubt hover about this lake some days, in order to make the most of their success."

"You think this Delaware can be depended on, Deerslayer?" demanded the girl, thoughtfully.

"As much as I can myself. You say you do not suspect me, Judith?"

"You!" taking his hand again, and pressing it between her own, with a warmth that might have awakened the vanity of one less simple-minded, and more disposed to dwell on his own good qualities, "I would as soon suspect a brother! I have known you but a day, Deerslayer, but it has awakened the confidence of a year. Your name, however, is not unknown to me; for the gallants of the garrisons frequently speak of the lessons you have given them in hunting, and all proclaim your honesty."

"Do they ever talk of the shooting, gal?" inquired the other eagerly, after, however, laughing in a silent but heartfelt manner. "Do they ever talk of the shooting? I want to hear nothing about my own, for if that isn't satisfied to by this time, in all these parts, there's little use in being skilful and sure; but what do the officers say of their own — yes, what do they say of their own? Arms, as they call it, is their trade, and yet there's some among 'em that know very little how to use 'em!"

"Such I hope will not be the case with your friend Chingachgook, as you call him — what is the English of his Indian name?"

"Big Serpent — so called for his wisdom and cunning, Uncas is his ra'al name — all his family being called Uncas until they get a title that has been 'arned by deeds."

"If he has all this wisdom, we may expect a useful friend in him, unless his own business in this part of the country should prevent him from serving us."

"I see no great harm in telling you his arr'nd, a'ter all, and, as you may find means to help us, I will let you and Hetty into the whole matter, trusting that you'll keep the secret as if it was your own. You must know that Chingachgook is a comely Injin, and is much looked upon and admired by the young women of his tribe, both on account of his family, and on account of himself. Now, there is a chief that has a daughter called Wah-ta-Wah, which is intarpreted into Hist-oh-Hist, in the English tongue, the rarest gal among the Delawares, and the one most sought a'ter and craved for a wife by all the young warriors of the nation. Well, Chingachgook, among others, took a fancy to Wah-ta-Wah, and Wah-ta-Wah took a fancy to him." Here Deerslayer paused an instant; for, as he got thus far in his tale, Hetty Hutter arose, approached, and stood attentive at his knee, as a child draws near to listen to the legends of its mother. "Yes, he fancied her, and she fancied him," resumed Deerslayer, casting a friendly and approving glance at the innocent and interested girl; "and when that is the case, and all the elders are agreed, it does not often happen that the young couple keep apart. Chingachgook couldn't well carry off such a prize without making inimies among them that wanted her as much as he did himself. A sartain Briarthorn, as we call him in English, or Yocommon, as he is tarmed in Injin, took it most to heart, and we mistrust him of having a hand in all that followed."

"Wah-ta-Wah went with her father and mother, two moons ago, to fish for salmon on the western streams, where it is agreed by all in these parts that fish most abounds, and while thus empl'yed the gal vanished. For several weeks we could get no tidings of her; but here, ten days since, a runner, that came through the Delaware country, brought us a message, by which we learn that Wah-ta-Wah was stolen from her people, we think, but do not know it, by Briarthorn's sarcumventions, -and that she was now with the inimy, who had adopted her, and wanted her to marry a young Mingo. The message said that the party intended to hunt and forage through this region for a month or two, afore it went back into the Canadas, and that if we could contrive to get on a scent in this quarter, something might turn up that would lead to our getting the maiden off."

"And how does that concern you, Deerslayer?" demanded Judith, a little anxiously.

"It consarns me, as all things that touches a fri'nd consarns a fri'nd. I'm here as Chingachgook's aid and helper, and if



we can get the young maiden he likes back ag'in, it will give me almost as much pleasure as if I had got back my own sweetheart."

"And where, then, is your sweetheart, Deerslayer?"

"She's in the forest, Judith — hanging from the boughs of the trees, in a soft rain — in the dew on the open grass — the clouds that float about in the blue heavens — the birds that sing in the woods — the sweet springs where I slake my thirst — and in all the other glorious gifts that come from God's Providence!"

"You mean that, as yet, you've never loved one of my sex, but love best your haunts, and your own manner of life."

"That's it — that's just it. I am white — have a white heart and can't, in reason, love a red-skinned maiden, who must have a red-skin heart and feelin's. No, no, I'm sound enough in them partic'lars, and hope to remain so, at least till this war is over. I find my time too much taken up with Chingachgook's affair, to wish to have one of my own on my hands afore that is settled."

"The girl that finally wins you, Deerslayer, will at least win an honest heart — one without treachery or guile; and that will be a victory that most of her sex ought to envy."

As Judith uttered this, her beautiful face had a resentful frown on it; while a bitter smile lingered around a mouth that no derangement of the muscles could render anything but handsome. Her companion observed the change, and though little skilled in the workings of the female heart, he had sufficient native delicacy to understand that it might be well to drop the subject.

As the hour when Chingachgook was expected still remained distant, Deerslayer had time enough to examine into the state of the defences, and to make such additional arrangements as were in his power, and the exigency of the moment seemed to require. The experience and foresight of Hutter had left little to be done in these particulars; still, several precautions suggested themselves to the young man, who may be said to have studied the art of frontier warfare, through the traditions and legends of the people among whom he had so long lived. The distance between the castle and the nearest point on the shore, prevented any apprehension on the subject of rifle-bullets thrown from the land. The house was within musket-shot in one sense, it was true, but aim was entirely out of the question, and even Judith professed a perfect disregard of any danger from that source. So long, then, as the party remained in possession of the fortress, they were safe, unless their assailants could find the means to come off and carry it by fire or storm, or by some of the devices of Indian cunning and Indian treachery.

Against the first source of danger Hutter had made ample provision, and the building itself, the bark roof excepted, was not very combustible. The floor was scuttled in several places, and buckets provided with ropes were in daily use, in readiness for any such emergency. One of the girls could easily extinguish any fire that might be lighted, provided it had not time to make much headway. Judith, who appeared to understand all her father's schemes of defence, and who had the spirit to take no unimportant share in the execution of them, explained all these details to the young man, who was thus saved much time and labor in making his investigations.

Little was to be apprehended during the day. In possession of the canoes and of the ark, no other vessel was to be found on the lake. Nevertheless, Deerslayer well knew that a raft was soon made, and, as dead trees were to be found in abundance near the water, did the savages seriously contemplate the risks of an assault, it would not be a very difficult matter to find the necessary means. The celebrated American axe, a tool that is quite unrivalled in its way, was then not very extensively known, and the savages were far from expert in the use of its hatchet-like substitute; still, they had sufficient practice in crossing streams by this mode to render it certain they would construct a raft, should they deem it expedient to expose themselves to the risks of an assault. The death of their warrior might prove a sufficient incentive, or it might act as a caution; but Deerslayer thought it more than possible that the succeeding night would bring matters to a crisis, and in this precise way. This impression caused him to wish ardently for the presence and succor of his Mohican friend, and to look forward to the approach of sunset with an increasing anxiety.

As the day advanced, the party in the castle matured their plans, and made their preparations. Judith was active, and seemed to find a pleasure in consulting and advising with her new acquaintance, whose indifference to danger, manly devotion to herself and sister, guilelessness of manner, and truth of feeling, had won rapidly on both her imagination and her affections. Although the hours appeared long in some respects to Deerslayer, Judith did not find them so, and when the sun began to descend towards the pine-clad summits of the western hills, she felt and expressed her surprise that the

day should so soon be drawing to a close. On the other hand, Hetty was moody and silent. She was never loquacious, or if she occasionally became communicative, it was under the influence of some temporary excitement that served to arouse her unsophisticated mind; but, for hours at a time, in the course of this all-important day, she seemed to have absolutely lost the use of her tongue. Nor did apprehension on account of her father materially affect the manner of either sister. Neither appeared seriously to dread any evil greater than captivity, and once or twice, when Hetty did speak, she intimated the expectation that Hutter would find the means to liberate himself. Although Judith was less sanguine on this head, she too betrayed the hope that propositions for a ransom would come, when the Indians discovered that the castle set their expedients and artifices at defiance. Deerslayer, however, treated these passing suggestions as the ill-digested fancies of girls, making his own arrangements as steadily, and brooding over the future as seriously, as if they had never fallen from their lips.

At length the hour arrived when it became necessary to proceed to the place of rendezvous appointed with the Mohican, or Delaware, as Chingachgook was more commonly called. As the plan had been matured by Deerslayer, and fully communicated to his companions, all three set about its execution, in concert, and intelligently. Hetty passed into the ark, and fastening two of the canoes together, she entered one, and paddled up to a sort of gateway in the palisadoes that surrounded the building, through which she carried both; securing them beneath the house by chains that were fastened within the building. These palisadoes were trunks of trees driven firmly into the mud, and served the double purpose of a small inclosure that was intended to be used in this very manner, and to keep any enemy that might approach in boats at arm's length. Canoes thus docked were, in a measure, hid from sight, and as the gate was properly barred and fastened, it would not be an easy task to remove them, even in the event of their being seen. Previously, however, to closing the gate, Judith also entered within the inclosure with the third canoe, leaving Deerslayer busy in securing the door and windows inside the building, over her head. As everything was massive and strong, and small saplings were used as bars, it would have been the work of an hour or two to break into the building, when Deerslayer had ended his task, even allowing the assailants the use of any tools but the axe, and to be unresisted. This attention to security arose from Hutter's having been robbed once or twice by the lawless whites of the frontiers, during some of his many absences from home.

As soon as all was fast in the inside of the dwelling, Deerslayer appeared at a trap, from which he descended into the canoe of Judith. When this was done, he fastened the door with a massive staple and stout padlock. Hetty was then received in the canoe, which was shoved outside of the palisadoes. The next precaution was to fasten the gate, and the keys were carried into the ark. The three were now fastened out of the dwelling, which could only be entered by violence, or by following the course taken by the young man in quitting it. The glass had been brought outside as a preliminary step, and Deerslayer next took a careful survey of the entire shore of the lake, as far as his own position would allow. Not a living thing was visible, a few birds excepted, and even the last fluttered about in the shades of the trees, as if unwilling to encounter the heat of a sultry afternoon. All the nearest points, in particular, were subjected to severe scrutiny, in order to make certain that no raft was in preparation; the result everywhere giving the same picture of calm solitude. A few words will explain the greatest embarrassment belonging to the situation of our party. Exposed themselves to the observation of any watchful eyes, the movements of their enemies were concealed by the drapery of a dense forest. While the imagination would be very apt to people the latter with more warriors than it really contained, their own weakness must be too apparent to all who might chance to cast a glance in their direction.

"Nothing is stirring, howsoever," exclaimed Deerslayer, as he finally lowered the glass, and prepared to enter the ark. "If the vagabonds do harbor mischief in their minds, they are too cunning to let it be seen; it's true, a raft may be in preparation in the woods, but it has not yet been brought down to the lake. They can't guess that we are about to quit the castle, and, if they did, they've no means of knowing where we intend to go."

"This is so true, Deerslayer," returned Judith, "that now all is ready, we may proceed at once, boldly, and without the fear of being followed; else we shall be behind our time."

"No, no; the matter needs management; for, though the savages are in the dark as to Chingachgook and the rock, they've eyes and legs, and will see in what direction we steer, and will be sartain to follow us. I shall strive to baffle 'em, howsoever, by heading the scow in all manner of ways, first in one quarter and then in another, until they get to be a-leg-weary, and tired of tramping a'ter us."

So far as it was in his power, Deerslayer was as good as his word. In less than five minutes after this speech was made, the whole party was in the ark, and in motion. There was a gentle breeze from the north, and boldly hoisting the sail, the

young man laid the head of the unwieldy craft in such a direction, as, after making a liberal but necessary allowance for leeway, would have brought it ashore a couple of miles down the lake, and on its eastern side. The sailing of the ark was never very swift, though, floating as it did on the surface, it was not difficult to get it in motion, or to urge it along over the water at the rate of some three or four miles in the hour. The distance between the castle and the rock was a little more than two leagues. Knowing the punctuality of an Indian, Deerslayer had made his calculations closely, and had given himself a little more time than was necessary to reach the place of rendezvous, with a view to delay or to press his arrival, as might prove most expedient. When he hoisted the sail, the sun lay above the western hills, at an elevation that promised rather more than two hours of day; and a few minutes satisfied him that the progress of the scow was such as to equal his expectations.

It was a glorious June afternoon, and never did that solitary sheet of water seem less like an arena of strife and bloodshed. The light air scarce descended as low as the bed of the lake, hovering over it, as if unwilling to disturb its deep tranquillity, or to ruffle its mirror-like surface. Even the forests appeared to be slumbering in the sun, and a few piles of fleecy clouds had lain for hours along the northern horizon like fixtures in the atmosphere, placed there purely to embellish the scene. A few aquatic fowls occasionally skimmed along the water, and a single raven was visible, sailing high above the trees, and keeping a watchful eye on the forest beneath him, in order to detect anything having life that the mysterious woods might offer as prey.

The reader will probably have observed, that, amidst the frankness and abruptness of manner which marked the frontier habits of Judith, her language was superior to that used by her male companions, her own father included. This difference extended as well to pronunciation as to the choice of words and phrases. Perhaps nothing so soon betrays the education and association as the modes of speech; and few accomplishments so much aid the charm of female beauty as a graceful and even utterance, while nothing so soon produces the disenchantment that necessarily follows a discrepancy between appearance and manner, as a mean intonation of voice, or a vulgar use of words. Judith and her sister were marked exceptions to all the girls of their class, along that whole frontier; the officers of the nearest garrison having often flattered the former with the belief that few ladies of the towns acquitted themselves better than herself, in this important particular. This was far from being literally true, but it was sufficiently near the fact to give birth to the compliment. The girls were indebted to their mother for this proficiency, having acquired from her, in childhood, an advantage that no subsequent study or labor can give without a drawback, if neglected beyond the earlier periods of life. Who that mother was, or rather had been, no one but Hutter knew. She had now been dead two summers, and, as was stated by Hurry, she had been buried in the lake; whether in indulgence of a prejudice, or from a reluctance to take the trouble to dig her grave, had frequently been a matter of discussion between the rude beings of that region. Judith had never visited the spot, but Hetty was present at the interment, and she often paddled a canoe, about sunset or by the light of the moon, to the place, and gazed down into the limpid water, in the hope of being able to catch a glimpse of the form that she had so tenderly loved from infancy to the sad hour of their parting.

"Must we reach the rock exactly at the moment the sun sets?" Judith demanded of the young man, as they stood near each other, Deerslayer holding the steering-oar, and she working with a needle at some ornament of dress, that much exceeded her station in life, and was altogether a novelty in the woods. "Will a few minutes, sooner or later, alter the matter? It will be very hazardous to remain long as near the shore as that rock!"

"That's it, Judith; that's the very difficulty! The rock's within p'int blank for a shot-gun, and 'twill never do to hover about it too close and too long. When you have to deal with an Injin, you must calculate and manage, for a red natur' dearly likes sarcumvention. Now you see, Judith, that I do not steer towards the rock at all, but here to the eastward of it, whereby the savages will be tramping off in that direction, and get their legs a-wearied, and all for no advantage."

"You think, then, they see us, and watch our movements, Deerslayer? I was in hopes they might have fallen back into the woods, and left us to ourselves for a few hours."

"That's altogether a woman's consait. There's no let-up in an Injin's watchfulness when he's on a war-path, and eyes are on us at this minute, 'though the lake presarves us. We must draw near the rock on a calculation, and indivor to get the miscreants on a false scent. The Mingos have good noses, they tell me; but a white man's reason ought always to equalize their instinct."

Judith now entered into a desultory discourse with Deerslayer, in which the girl betrayed her growing interest in the young man; an interest that his simplicity of mind and her decision of character, sustained as it was by the consciousness

awakened by the consideration her personal charms so universally produced, rendered her less anxious to conceal than might otherwise have been the case. She was scarcely forward in her manner, though there was sometimes a freedom in her glances that it required all the aid of her exceeding beauty to prevent from awakening suspicions unfavorable to her discretion, if not to her morals. With Deerslayer, however, these glances were rendered less obnoxious to so unpleasant a construction; for she seldom looked at him without discovering much of the sincerity and nature that accompany the purest emotions of woman. It was a little remarkable that, as his captivity lengthened, neither of the girls manifested any great concern for her father; but, as has been said already, their habits gave them confidence, and they looked forward to his liberation, by means of a ransom, with a confidence that might, in a great degree, account for their apparent indifference. Once before, Hutter had been in the hands of the Iroquois, and a few skins had readily effected his release. This event, however, unknown to the sisters, had occurred in a time of peace between England and France, and when the savages were restrained, instead of being encouraged to commit their excesses, by the policy of the different colonial governments.

While Judith was loquacious and caressing in her manner, Hetty remained thoughtful and silent. Once, indeed, she drew near to Deerslayer, and questioned him a little closely as to his intentions, as well as concerning the mode of effecting his purpose; but her wish to converse went no further. As soon as her simple queries were answered — and answered they all were, in the fullest and kindest manner — she withdrew to her seat, and continued to work on a coarse garment that she was making for her father, sometimes humming a low melancholy air, and frequently sighing.

In this manner the time passed away; and when the sun was beginning to glow behind the fringe of the pines that bounded the western hill, or about twenty minutes before it actually set, the ark was nearly as low as the point where Hutter and Hurry had been made prisoners. By sheering first to one side of the lake, and then to the other, Deerslayer managed to create an uncertainty as to his object; and, doubtless, the savages, who were unquestionably watching his movements, were led to believe that his aim was to communicate with them, at or near this spot, and would hasten in that direction, in order to be in readiness to profit by circumstances. This artifice was well managed; since the sweep of the bay, the curvature of the lake, and the low marshy land that intervened, would probably allow the ark to reach the rock before its pursuers, if really collected near this point, could have time to make the circuit that would be required to get there by land. With a view to aid this deception, Deerslayer stood as near the western shore as was at all prudent; and then causing Judith and Hetty to enter the house, or cabin, and crouching himself so as to conceal his person by the frame of the scow, he suddenly threw the head of the latter round, and began to make the best of his way towards the outlet. Favored by an increase in the wind, the progress of the ark was such as to promise the complete success of this plan, though the crab-like movement of the craft compelled the helmsman to keep its head looking in a direction very different from that in which it was actually moving.



## CHAPTER 9

*"Yet art thou prodigal of smiles —  
Smiles, sweeter than thy frowns are stern:  
Earth sends from all her thousand isles,  
A shout at thy return.  
The glory that comes down from thee  
Bathes, in deep joy, the land and sea."*

—BRYANT, "THE FIRMAMENT," 11.19–24

It may assist the reader in understanding the events we are about to record, if he has a rapidly sketched picture of the scene, placed before his eyes at a single view. It will be remembered that the lake was an irregularly shaped basin, of an outline that, in the main, was oval, but with bays and points to relieve its formality and ornament its shores. The surface of this beautiful sheet of water was now glittering like a gem, in the last rays of the evening sun, and the setting of the whole, hills clothed in the richest forest verdure, was lighted up with a sort of radiant smile, that is best described in the beautiful lines we have placed at the head of this chapter. As the banks, with few exceptions, rose abruptly from the water, even where the mountain did not immediately bound the view, there was a nearly unbroken fringe of leaves overhanging the placid lake, the trees starting out of the acclivities, inclining to the light, until, in many instances they extended their long limbs and straight trunks some forty or fifty feet beyond the line of the perpendicular. In these cases we allude only to the giants of the forest, pines of a hundred or a hundred and fifty feet in height, for of the smaller growth, very many inclined so far as to steep their lower branches in the water. In the position in which the Ark had now got, the castle was concealed from view by the projection of a point, as indeed was the northern extremity of the lake itself. A respectable mountain, forest clad, and rounded, like all the rest, limited the view in that direction, stretching immediately across the whole of the fair scene, with the exception of a deep bay that passed the western end, lengthening the basin, for more than a mile.

The manner in which the water flowed out of the lake, beneath the leafy arches of the trees that lined the sides of the stream, has already been mentioned, and it has also been said that the rock, which was a favorite place of rendezvous throughout all that region, and where Deerslayer now expected to meet his friend, stood near this outlet, and at no great distance from the shore. It was a large, isolated stone that rested on the bottom of the lake, apparently left there when the waters tore away the earth from around it, in forcing for themselves a passage down the river, and which had obtained its shape from the action of the elements, during the slow progress of centuries. The height of this rock could scarcely equal six feet, and, as has been said, its shape was not unlike that which is usually given to beehives, or to a hay-cock. The latter, indeed, gives the best idea not only of its form, but of its dimensions. It stood, and still stands, for we are writing of real scenes, within fifty feet of the bank, and in water that was only two feet in depth, though there were seasons in which its rounded apex, if such a term can properly be used, was covered by the lake. Many of the trees stretched so far forward, as almost to blend the rock with the shore, when seen from a little distance, and one tall pine in particular overhung it in a way to form a noble and appropriate canopy to a seat that had held many a forest chieftain, during the long succession of unknown ages, in which America, and all it contained, had existed apart, in mysterious solitude, a world by itself; equally without a familiar history, and without an origin that the annals of man can reach.

When distant some two or three hundred feet from the shore, Deerslayer took in his sail. He dropped his grapnel, as soon as he found the Ark had drifted in a line that was directly to windward of the rock. The motion of the scow was then checked, when it was brought head to wind, by the action of the breeze. As soon as this was done, Deerslayer "paid out line," and suffered the vessel to "set down" upon the rock, as fast as the light air could force it to leeward. Floating entirely on the surface, this was soon effected, and the young man checked the drift when he was told that the stern of the scow was within fifteen or eighteen feet of the desired spot.

In executing this maneuver, Deerslayer had proceeded promptly, for, while he did not in the least doubt that he was both watched and followed by the foe, he believed he distracted their movements, by the apparent uncertainty of his own, and he knew they could have no means of ascertaining that the rock was his aim, unless indeed one of their prisoners had betrayed him; a chance so improbable in itself, as to give him no concern. Notwithstanding the celerity and decision his movements, he did not, however, venture so near the shore without taking due precautions to effect a retreat, in the event of its becoming necessary. He held the line in his hand, and Judith was stationed at a loop, on the side of the cabin next the

shore, where she could watch the beach and the rock, and give timely notice of the approach of either friend or foe. Hetty was also placed on watch, but it was to keep the trees overhead in view, lest some enemy might ascend one, and, by completely commanding the interior of the scow render the defence of the hut, or cabin, useless.

The sun had disappeared from the lake and valley, when Deerslayer checked the Ark, in the manner mentioned. Still it wanted a few minutes to the true sunset, and he knew Indian punctuality too well to anticipate any unmanly haste in his friend. The great question was, whether, surrounded by enemies as he was known to be, he had escaped their toils. The occurrences of the last twenty-four hours must be a secret to him, and like himself, Chingachgook was yet young on a path. It was true, he came prepared to encounter the party that withheld his promised bride, but he had no means ascertaining the extent of the danger he ran, or the precise positions occupied by either friends, or foes. In a word, the trained sagacity, and untiring caution of an Indian were all he had to rely on, amid the critical risks he unavoidably ran.

"Is the rock empty, Judith?" inquired Deerslayer, as soon as he had checked the drift of the Ark, deeming it imprudent to venture unnecessarily near the shore. "Is any thing to be seen of the Delaware chief?"

"Nothing, Deerslayer. Neither rock, shore, trees, nor lake seems to have ever held a human form."

'Keep close, Judith — keep close, Hetty — a rifle has a prying eye, a nimble foot, and a desperate fatal tongue. Keep close then, but keep up active looks, and be on the alert. 'Twould grieve me to the heart, did any harm befall either of you.'

"And you Deerslayer—" exclaimed Judith, turning her handsome face from the loop, to bestow a gracious and grateful look on the young man — "do you 'keep close', and have a proper care that the savages do not catch a glimpse of you! A bullet might be as fatal to you as to one of us; and the blow that you felt, would be felt by us all."

"No fear of me, Judith — no fear of me, my good gal. Do not look this-a-way, although you look so pleasant and comely, but keep your eyes on the rock, and the shore, and the—"

Deerslayer was interrupted by a slight exclamation from the girl, who, in obedience to his hurried gestures, as much as in obedience to his words, had immediately bent her looks again, in the opposite direction.

"What is't? — What is't, Judith?" he hastily demanded — "Is any thing to be seen?"

"There is a man on the rock! — An Indian warrior, in his paint-and armed!"

"Where does he wear his hawk's feather?" eagerly added Deerslayer, relaxing his hold of the line, in readiness to drift nearer to the place of rendezvous. "Is it fast to the war-lock, or does he carry it above the left ear?"

"'Tis as you say, above the left ear; he smiles, too, and mutters the word 'Mohican.'"

"God be praised, 'tis the Sarpent, at last!" exclaimed the young man, suffering the line to slip through his hands, until hearing a light bound, in the other end of the craft, he instantly checked the rope, and began to haul it in, again, under the assurance that his object was effected. At that moment the door of the cabin was opened hastily, and, a warrior, darting through the little room, stood at Deerslayer's side, simply uttering the exclamation "Hugh!" At the next instant, Judith and Hetty shrieked, and the air was filled with the yell of twenty savages, who came leaping through the branches, down the bank, some actually falling headlong into the water, in their haste.

"Pull, Deerslayer," cried Judith, hastily barring the door, in order to prevent an inroad by the passage through which the Delaware had just entered; "pull, for life and death — the lake is full of savages, wading after us!"

The young men — for Chingachgook immediately came to his friend's assistance — needed no second bidding, but they applied themselves to their task in a way that showed how urgent they deemed the occasion. The great difficulty was in suddenly overcoming the inertia of so large a mass, for once in motion, it was easy to cause the scow to skim the water with all the necessary speed.

"Pull, Deerslayer, for Heaven's sake!" cried Judith, again at the loop. "These wretches rush into the water like hounds following their prey! Ah — the scow moves! and now, the water deepens, to the arm-pits of the foremost, but they reach forward, and will seize the Ark!"

A slight scream, and then a joyous laugh followed from the girl; the first produced by a desperate effort of their pursuers, and the last by its failure; the scow, which had now got fairly in motion gliding ahead into deep water, with a velocity that set the designs of their enemies at naught. As the two men were prevented by the position of the cabin from seeing what passed astern, they were compelled to inquire of the girls into the state of the chase.

"What now, Judith? — What next? — Do the Mingos still follow, or are we quit of 'em, for the present," demanded

Deerslayer, when he felt the rope yielding as if the scow was going fast ahead, and heard the scream and the laugh of the girl, almost in the same breath.

“They have vanished! — One — the last — is just burying himself in the bushes of the bank — There, he has disappeared in the shadows of the trees! You have got your friend, and we are all safe!”

The two men now made another great effort, pulled the Ark up swiftly to the grapnel, tripped it, and when the scow had shot some distance and lost its way, they let the anchor drop again. Then, for the first time since their meeting, they ceased their efforts. As the floating house now lay several hundred feet from the shore, and offered a complete protection against bullets, there was no longer any danger or any motive for immediate exertion.

The manner in which the two friends now recognized each other, was highly characteristic. Chingachgook, a noble, tall, handsome and athletic young Indian warrior, first examined his rifle with care, opening the pan to make sure that the priming was not wet, and, assured of this important fact, he next cast furtive but observant glances around him, at the strange habitation and at the two girls. Still he spoke not, and most of all did he avoid the betrayal of a womanish curiosity, by asking questions.

“Judith and Hetty” said Deerslayer, with an untaught, natural courtesy — “this is the Mohican chief of whom you’ve heard me speak; Chingachgook as he is called; which signifies Big Serpent; so named for his wisdom and prudence, and cunning, and my ‘arliest and latest fri’nd. I know’d it must be he, by the hawk’s feather over the left ear, most other warriors wearing ‘em on the war-lock.”

As Deerslayer ceased speaking, he laughed heartily, excited more perhaps by the delight of having got his friend safe at his side, under circumstances so trying, than by any conceit that happened to cross his fancy, and exhibiting this outbreaking of feeling in a manner that was a little remarkable, since his merriment was not accompanied by any noise. Although Chingachgook both understood and spoke English, he was unwilling to communicate his thoughts in it, like most Indians, and when he had met Judith’s cordial shake of the hand, and Hetty’s milder salute, in the courteous manner that became a chief, he turned away, apparently to await the moment when it might suit his friend to enter into an explanation of his future intentions, and to give a narrative of what had passed since their separation. The other understood his meaning, and discovered his own mode of reasoning in the matter, by addressing the girls.

“This wind will soon die away altogether, now the sun is down,” he said, “and there is no need for rowing ag’in it. In half an hour, or so, it will either be a flat calm, or the air will come off from the south shore, when we will begin our journey back ag’in to the castle; in the meanwhile, the Delaware and I will talk over matters, and get correct idees of each other’s notions consarnin the course we ought to take.”

No one opposed this proposition, and the girls withdrew into the cabin to prepare the evening meal, while the two young men took their seats on the head of the scow and began to converse. The dialogue was in the language of the Delawares. As that dialect, however, is but little understood, even by the learned; we shall not only on this, but on all subsequent occasions render such parts as it may be necessary to give closely, into liberal English; preserving, as far as possible, the idiom and peculiarities of the respective speakers, by way of presenting the pictures in the most graphic forms to the minds of the readers.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details first related by Deerslayer, who gave a brief narrative of the facts that are already familiar to those who have read our pages. In relating these events, however, it may be well to say that the speaker touched only on the outlines, more particularly abstaining from saying anything about his encounter with, and victory over the Iroquois, as well as to his own exertions in behalf of the two deserted young women. When Deerslayer ended, the Delaware took up the narrative, in turn, speaking sententiously and with grave dignity. His account was both clear and short, nor was it embellished by any incidents that did not directly concern the history of his departure from the villages of his people, and his arrival in the valley of the Susquehannah. On reaching the latter, which was at a point only half a mile south of the outlet, he had soon struck a trail, which gave him notice of the probable vicinity of enemies. Being prepared for such an occurrence, the object of the expedition calling him directly into the neighborhood of the party of Iroquois that was known to be out, he considered the discovery as fortunate, rather than the reverse, and took the usual precautions to turn it to account. First following the river to its source, and ascertaining the position of the rock, he met another trail, and had actually been hovering for hours on the flanks of his enemies, watching equally for an opportunity to meet his mistress, and to take a scalp; and it may be questioned which he most ardently desired. He kept near the lake, and

occasionally he ventured to some spot where he could get a view of what was passing on its surface. The Ark had been seen and watched, from the moment it hove in sight, though the young chief was necessarily ignorant that it was to be the instrument of his effecting the desired junction with his friend. The uncertainty of its movements, and the fact that it was unquestionably managed by white men, soon led him to conjecture the truth, however, and he held himself in readiness to get on board whenever a suitable occasion might offer. As the sun drew near the horizon he repaired to the rock, where, on emerging from the forest, he was gratified in finding the Ark lying, apparently in readiness to receive him. The manner of his appearance, and of his entrance into the craft is known.

Although Chingachgook had been closely watching his enemies for hours, their sudden and close pursuit as he reached the scow was as much a matter of surprise to himself, as it had been to his friend. He could only account for it by the fact of their being more numerous than he had at first supposed, and by their having out parties of the existence of which he was ignorant. Their regular, and permanent encampment, if the word permanent can be applied to the residence of a party that intended to remain out, in all probability, but a few weeks, was not far from the spot where Hutter and Hurry had fallen into their hands, and, as a matter of course, near a spring.

“Well, Sarpent,” asked Deerslayer, when the other had ended his brief but spirited narrative, speaking always in the Delaware tongue, which for the reader’s convenience only we render into the peculiar vernacular of the speaker — “Well, Sarpent, as you’ve been scouting around these Mingos, have you anything to tell us of their captyves, the father of these young women, and of another, who, I somewhat conclude, is the lovyer of one of ’em.”

“Chingachgook has seen them. An old man, and a young warrior — the falling hemlock and the tall pine.”

“You’re not so much out, Delaware; you’re not so much out. Old Hutter is decaying, of a sartainty, though many solid blocks might be hewn out of his trunk yet, and, as for Hurry Harry, so far as height and strength and comeliness go, he may be called the pride of the human forest. Were the men bound, or in any manner suffering torture? I ask on account of the young women, who, I dare to say, would be glad to know.”

“It is not so, Deerslayer. The Mingos are too many to cage their game. Some watch; some sleep; some scout; some hunt. The pale-faces are treated like brothers to-day; to-morrow they will lose their scalps.”

“Yes, that’s red natur’, and must be submitted to! Judith and Hetty, here’s comforting tidings for you, the Delaware telling me that neither your father nor Hurry Harry is in suffering, but, bating the loss of liberty, as well off as we are ourselves. Of course they are kept in the camp; otherwise they do much as they please.”

“I rejoice to hear this, Deerslayer,” returned Judith, “and now we are joined by your friend, I make no manner of question that we shall find an opportunity to ransom the prisoners. If there are any women in the camp, I have articles of dress that will catch their eyes, and, should the worst come to the worst, we can open the great chest, which I think will be found to hold things that may tempt the chiefs.”

“Judith,” said the young man, looking up at her with a smile and an expression of earnest curiosity, that in spite of the growing obscurity did not escape the watchful looks of the girl, “can you find it in your heart, to part with your own finery, to release prisoners; even though one be your own father, and the other is your sworn suitor and lovyer?”

The flush on the face of the girl arose in part from resentment, but more perhaps from a gentler and a novel feeling, that, with the capricious waywardness of taste, had been rapidly rendering her more sensitive to the good opinion of the youth who questioned her, than to that of any other person. Suppressing the angry sensation, with instinctive quickness, she answered with a readiness and truth, that caused her sister to draw near to listen, though the obtuse intellect of the latter was far from comprehending the workings of a heart as treacherous, as uncertain, and as impetuous in its feelings, as that of the spoiled and flattered beauty.

“Deerslayer,” answered Judith, after a moment’s pause, “I shall be honest with you. I confess that the time has been when what you call finery, was to me the dearest thing on earth; but I begin to feel differently. Though Hurry Harry is nought to me nor ever can be, I would give all I own to set him free. If I would do this for blustering, bullying, talking Hurry, who has nothing but good looks to recommend him, you may judge what I would do for my own father.”

“This sounds well, and is according to woman’s gifts. Ah’s, me! The same feelin’s is to be found among the young women of the Delawares. I’ve known ’em, often and often, sacrifice their vanity to their hearts. Tis as it should be — ’tis as it should be I suppose, in both colours. Woman was created for the feelin’s, and is pretty much ruled by feelin’.”

“Would the savages let father go, if Judith and I give them all our best things?” demanded Hetty, in her innocent, mild,



manner.

"Their women might interfere, good Hetty; yes, their women might interfere with such an ind in view. But, tell me, Sarpent, how is it as to squaws among the knaves; have they many of their own women in the camp?"

The Delaware heard and understood all that passed, though with Indian gravity and finesse he had sat with averted face, seemingly inattentive to a discourse in which he had no direct concern. Thus appealed to, however, he answered his friend in his ordinary sententious manner.

"Six —" he said, holding up all the fingers of one hand, and the thumb of the other, "besides this." The last number denoted his betrothed, whom, with the poetry and truth of nature, he described by laying his hand on his own heart.

"Did you see her, chief — did you get a glimpse of her pleasant countenance, or come close enough to her ear, to sing in it the song she loves to hear?"

"No, Deerslayer — the trees were too many, and leaves covered their boughs like clouds hiding' the heavens in a storm. But" — and the young warrior turned his dark face towards his friend, with a smile on it that illuminated its fierce-looking paint and naturally stern lineaments with a bright gleam of human feeling, "Chingachgook heard the laugh of Wah-ta-Wah, and knew it from the laugh of the women of the Iroquois. It sounded in his ears, like the chirp of the wren."

"Ay, trust a lovyer's ear for that, and a Delaware's ear for all sounds that are ever heard in the woods. I know not why it is so, Judith, but when young men — and I dares to say it may be all the same with young women, too — but when they get to have kind feelin's towards each other, it's wonderful how pleasant the laugh, or the speech becomes, to the other person. I've seen grim warriors listening to the chattering and the laughing of young gals, as if it was church music, such as is heard in the old Dutch church that stands in the great street of Albany, where I've been, more than once, with peltry and game."

"And you, Deerslayer," said Judith quickly, and with more sensibility than marked her usually light and thoughtless manner — "have you never felt how pleasant it is to listen to the laugh of the girl you love?"

"Lord bless you gal! — Why I've never lived enough among my own colour to drop into them sort of feelin's — no never! I dares to say, they are nat'ral and right, but to me there's no music so sweet as the sighing of the wind in the tree tops, and the rippling of a stream from a full, sparkling, natyve fountain of pure forest water — unless, indeed," he continued, dropping his head for an instant in a thoughtful manner — "unless indeed it be the open mouth of a sartain hound, when I'm on the track of a fat buck. As for unsartain dogs, I care little for their cries, seein' they are as likely to speak when the deer is not in sight, as when it is."

Judith walked slowly and pensively away, nor was there any of her ordinary calculating coquetry in the light tremulous sigh that, unconsciously to herself, arose to her lips. On the other hand Hetty listened with guileless attention, though it struck her simple mind as singular that the young man should prefer the melody of the woods, to the songs of girls, or even to the laugh of innocence and joy. Accustomed, however, to defer in most things to her sister, she soon followed Judith into the cabin, where she took a seat and remained pondering intensely over some occurrence, or resolution, or opinion — which was a secret to all but herself. Left alone, Deerslayer and his friend resumed their discourse.

"Has the young pale-face hunter been long on this lake?" demanded the Delaware, after courteously waiting for the other to speak first.

"Only since yesterday noon, Sarpent, though that has been long enough to see and do much." The gaze that the Indian fastened on his companion was so keen that it seemed to mock the gathering darkness of the night. As the other furtively returned his look, he saw the two black eyes glistening on him, like the balls of the panther, or those of the penned wolf. He understood the meaning of this glowing gaze, and answered evasively, as he fancied would best become the modesty of a white man's gifts.

"'Tis as you suspect, Sarpent; yes, 'tis somewhat that-a-way. I have fell in with the inimy, and I suppose it may be said I've fou't them, too."

An exclamation of delight and exultation escaped the Indian, and then laying his hand eagerly on the arm of his friend, he asked if there were any scalps taken.

"That I will maintain in the face of all the Delaware tribe, old Tamenund, and your own father the great Uncas, as well as the rest, is ag'in white gifts! My scalp is on my head, as you can see, Sarpent, and that was the only scalp that was in danger, when one side was altogether Christian and white."

"Did no warrior fall? — Deerslayer did not get his name by being slow of sight, or clumsy with the rifle!"

“In that particular, chief, you’re nearer reason, and therefore nearer being right. I may say one Mingo fell.”

“A chief!” demanded the other with startling vehemence.

“Nay, that’s more than I know, or can say. He was artful, and treacherous, and stout-hearted, and may well have gained popularity enough with his people to be named to that rank. The man fou’t well, though his eye was’n’t quick enough for one who had had his schooling in your company, Delaware.”

“My brother and friend struck the body?”

“That was uncalled for, seeing that the Mingo died in my arms. The truth may as well be said, at once; he fou’t like a man of red gifts, and I fou’t like a man with gifts of my own colour. God gave me the victory; I coul’n’t fly in the face of his Providence by forgetting my birth and natur’. White he made me, and white I shall live and die.”

“Good! Deerslayer is a pale-face, and has pale-face hands. A Delaware will look for the scalp, and hang it on a pole, and sing a song in his honour, when we go back to our people. The glory belongs to the tribe; it must not be lost.”

“This is easy talking, but ’twill not be as easy doing. The Mingo’s body is in the hands of his fri’nds and, no doubt, is hid in some hole where Delaware cunning will never be able to get at the scalp.”

The young man then gave his friend a succinct, but clear account, of the event of the morning, concealing nothing of any moment, and yet touching on every thing modestly and with a careful attention to avoid the Indian habit of boasting. Chingachgook again expressed his satisfaction at the honour won by his friend, and then both arose, the hour having arrived when it became prudent to move the Ark further from the land.

It was now quite dark, the heavens having become clouded, and the stars hid. The north wind had ceased — as was usual with the setting of the sun, and a light air arose from the south. This change favoring the design of Deerslayer, he lifted his grapnel, and the scow immediately and quite perceptibly began to drift more into the lake. The sail was set, when the motion of the craft increased to a rate not much less than two miles in the hour. As this superseded the necessity of rowing, an occupation that an Indian would not be likely to desire, Deerslayer, Chingachgook and Judith seated themselves in the stern of the scow, where they first governed its movements by holding the oar. Here they discoursed on their future movements, and on the means that ought to be used in order to effect the liberation of their friends.

In this dialogue Judith held a material part, the Delaware readily understanding all she said, while his own replies and remarks, both of which were few and pithy, were occasionally rendered into English by his friend. Judith rose greatly in the estimation of her companions, in the half hour that followed. Prompt of resolution and firm of purpose, her suggestions and expedients partook of her spirit and sagacity, both of which were of a character to find favor with men of the frontier. The events that had occurred since their meeting, as well as her isolated and dependant situation, induced the girl to feel towards Deerslayer like the friend of a year instead of an acquaintance of a day, and so completely had she been won by his guileless truth of character and of feeling, pure novelties in our sex, as respected her own experience, that his peculiarities excited her curiosity, and created a confidence that had never been awakened by any other man. Hitherto she had been compelled to stand on the defensive in her intercourse with men, with what success was best known to herself, but here had she been suddenly thrown into the society and under the protection of a youth, who evidently as little contemplated evil towards herself as if he had been her brother. The freshness of his integrity, the poetry and truth of his feelings, and even the quaintness of his forms of speech, all had their influence, and aided in awakening an interest that she found as pure as it was sudden and deep. Hurry’s fine face and manly form had never compensated for his boisterous and vulgar tone, and her intercourse with the officers had prepared her to make comparisons under which even his great natural advantages suffered. But this very intercourse with the officers who occasionally came upon the lake to fish and hunt, had an effect in producing her present sentiments towards the young stranger. With them, while her vanity had been gratified, and her self-love strongly awakened, she had many causes deeply to regret the acquaintance — if not to mourn over it, in secret sorrow — for it was impossible for one of her quick intellect not to perceive how hollow was the association between superior and inferior, and that she was regarded as the play thing of an idle hour, rather than as an equal and a friend, by even the best intentioned and least designing of her scarlet-clad admirers. Deerslayer, on the other hand, had a window in his breast through which the light of his honesty was ever shining; and even his indifference to charms that so rarely failed to produce a sensation, piqued the pride of the girl, and gave him an interest that another, seemingly more favored by nature, might have failed to excite.

In this manner half an hour passed, during which time the Ark had been slowly stealing over the water, the darkness

thickening around it; though it was easy to see that the gloom of the forest at the southern end of the lake was getting to be distant, while the mountains that lined the sides of the beautiful basin were overshadowing it, nearly from side to side. There was, indeed, a narrow stripe of water, in the centre of the lake where the dim light that was still shed from the heavens, fell upon its surface in a line extending north and south; and along this faint track, a sort of inverted milky way, in which the obscurity was not quite as dense as in other places, the scow held her course, he who steered well knowing that it led in the direction he wished to go. The reader is not to suppose, however, that any difficulty could exist as to the course. This would have been determined by that of the air, had it not been possible to distinguish the mountains, as well as by the dim opening to the south, which marked the position of the valley in that quarter, above the plain of tall trees, by a sort of lessened obscurity; the difference between the darkness of the forest, and that of the night, as seen only in the air. The peculiarities at length caught the attention of Judith and the Deerslayer, and the conversation ceased, to allow each to gaze at the solemn stillness and deep repose of nature.

"'Tis a gloomy night —" observed the girl, after a pause of several minutes — "I hope we may be able to find the castle."

"Little fear of our missing that, if we keep this path in the middle of the lake," returned the young man. "Natur' has made us a road here, and, dim as it is, there'll be little difficulty following it."

"Do you hear nothing, Deerslayer? — It seemed as if the water was stirring quite near us!"

"Sartainly something did move the water, oncommon like; must have been a fish. Them creatur's prey upon each other like men and animals on the land; one has leaped into the air and fallen hard, back into his own element. 'Tis of little use Judith, for any to strive to get out of their elements, since it's natur' to stay in 'em, and natur' will have its way. Ha! That sounds like a paddle, used with more than common caution!"

At this moment the Delaware bent forward and pointed significantly into the boundary of gloom, as if some object had suddenly caught his eye. Both Deerslayer and Judith followed the direction of his gesture, and each got a view of a canoe at the same instant. The glimpse of this startling neighbor was dim, and to eyes less practised it might have been uncertain, though to those in the Ark the object was evidently a canoe with a single individual in it; the latter standing erect and paddling. How many lay concealed in its bottom, of course could not be known. Flight, by means of oars, from a bark canoe impelled by vigorous and skilful hands, was utterly impracticable, and each of the men seized his rifle in expectation of a conflict.

"I can easily bring down the paddler," whispered Deerslayer, "but we'll first hail him, and ask his arrn'd." Then raising his voice, he continued in a solemn manner — "hold! If ye come nearer, I must fire, though contrary to my wishes, and then sartain death will follow. Stop paddling, and answer."

"Fire, and slay a poor defenseless girl," returned a soft tremulous female voice. "And God will never forgive you! Go your way, Deerslayer, and let me go mine."

"Hetty!" exclaimed the young man and Judith in a breath; and the former sprang instantly to the spot where he had left the canoe they had been towing. It was gone, and he understood the whole affair. As for the fugitive, frightened at the menace she ceased paddling, and remained dimly visible, resembling a spectral outline of a human form, standing on the water. At the next moment the sail was lowered, to prevent the Ark from passing the spot where the canoe lay. This last expedient, however, was not taken in time, for the momentum of so heavy a craft, and the impulsion of the air, soon set her by, bringing Hetty directly to windward, though still visible, as the change in the positions of the two boats now placed her in that species of milky way which has been mentioned.

"What can this mean, Judith?" demanded Deerslayer — "Why has your sister taken the canoe, and left us?"

"You know she is feeble-minded, poor girl! — and she has her own ideas of what ought to be done. She loves her father more than most children love their parents — and — then —"

"Then, what, gal? This is a trying moment; one in which truth must be spoken!"

Judith felt a generous and womanly regret at betraying her sister, and she hesitated ere she spoke again. But once more urged by Deerslayer, and conscious herself of all the risks the whole party was running by the indiscretion of Hetty, she could refrain no longer.

"Then, I fear, poor, weak-minded Hetty has not been altogether able to see all the vanity, and rudeness and folly, that lie hid behind the handsome face and fine form of Hurry Harry. She talks of him in her sleep, and sometimes betrays the inclination in her waking moments."

“You think, Judith, that your sister is now bent on some mad scheme to serve her father and Hurry, which will, in all likelihood, give them riptyles the Mingos, the mastership of a canoe?”

“Such, I fear, will turn out to be the fact, Deerslayer. Poor Hetty has hardly sufficient cunning to outwit a savage.”

All this while the canoe, with the form of Hetty erect in one end of it, was dimly perceptible, though the greater drift of the Ark rendered it, at each instant, less and less distinct. It was evident no time was to be lost, lest it should altogether disappear. The rifles were now laid aside as useless, the two men seizing the oars and sweeping the head of the scow round in the direction of the canoe. Judith, accustomed to the office, flew to the other end of the Ark, and placed herself at what might be called the helm. Hetty took the alarm at these preparations, which could not be made without noise, and started off like a bird that had been suddenly put up by the approach of unexpected danger.

As Deerslayer and his companion rowed with the energy of those who felt the necessity of straining every nerve, and Hetty's strength was impaired by a nervous desire to escape, the chase would have quickly terminated in the capture of the fugitive, had not the girl made several short and unlooked-for deviations in her course. These turnings gave her time, and they had also the effect of gradually bringing both canoe and Ark within the deeper gloom, cast by the shadows from the hills. They also gradually increased the distance between the fugitive and her pursuers, until Judith called out to her companions to cease rowing, for she had completely lost sight of the canoe.

When this mortifying announcement was made, Hetty was actually so near as to understand every syllable her sister uttered, though the latter had used the precaution of speaking as low as circumstances would allow her to do, and to make herself heard. Hetty stopped paddling at the same moment, and waited the result with an impatience that was breathless, equally from her late exertions, and her desire to land. A dead silence immediately fell on the lake, during which the three in the Ark were using their senses differently, in order to detect the position of the canoe. Judith bent forward to listen, in the hope of catching some sound that might betray the direction in which her sister was stealing away, while her two companions brought their eyes as near as possible to a level with the water, in order to detect any object that might be floating on its surface. All was vain, however, for neither sound nor sight rewarded their efforts. All this time Hetty, who had not the cunning to sink into the canoe, stood erect, a finger pressed on her lips, gazing in the direction in which the voices had last been heard, resembling a statue of profound and timid attention. Her ingenuity had barely sufficed to enable her to seize the canoe and to quit the Ark, in the noiseless manner related, and then it appeared to be momentarily exhausted. Even the doublings of the canoe had been as much the consequence of an uncertain hand and of nervous agitation, as of any craftiness or calculation.

The pause continued several minutes, during which Deerslayer and the Delaware conferred together in the language of the latter. Then the oars dipped, again, and the Ark moved away, rowing with as little noise as possible. It steered westward, a little southerly, or in the direction of the encampment of the enemy. Having reached a point at no great distance from the shore, and where the obscurity was intense on account of the proximity of the land, it lay there near an hour, in waiting for the expected approach of Hetty, who, it was thought, would make the best of her way to that spot as soon as she believed herself released from the danger of pursuit. No success rewarded this little blockade, however, neither appearance nor sound denoting the passage of the canoe. Disappointed at this failure, and conscious of the importance of getting possession of the fortress before it could be seized by the enemy, Deerslayer now took his way towards the castle, with the apprehension that all his foresight in securing the canoes would be defeated by this unguarded and alarming movement on the part of the feeble-minded Hetty.



## CHAPTER 10

*"But who in this wild wood  
May credit give to either eye, or ear?  
From rocky precipice or hollow cave,  
'Midst the confused sound of rustling leaves,  
And creaking boughs, and cries of nightly birds,  
Returning seeming answer!"*

—JOANNA BAIHIE, "RAYNER: A TRAGEDY," ILL3-4, 6-G.

Fear, as much as calculation, had induced Hetty to cease paddling, when she found that her pursuers did not know in which direction to proceed. She remained stationary until the Ark had pulled in near the encampment, as has been related in the preceding chapter, when she resumed the paddle and with cautious strokes made the best of her way towards the western shore. In order to avoid her pursuers, however, who, she rightly suspected, would soon be rowing along that shore themselves, the head of the canoe was pointed so far north as to bring her to land on a point that thrust itself into the lake, at the distance of near a league from the outlet. Nor was this altogether the result of a desire to escape, for, feeble minded as she was, Hetty Hutter had a good deal of that instinctive caution which so often keeps those whom God has thus visited from harm. She was perfectly aware of the importance of keeping the canoes from falling into the hands of the Iroquois, and long familiarity with the lake had suggested one of the simplest expedients, by which this great object could be rendered compatible with her own purpose.

The point in question was the first projection that offered on that side of the lake, where a canoe, if set adrift with a southerly air would float clear of the land, and where it would be no great violation of probabilities to suppose it might even hit the castle; the latter lying above it, almost in a direct line with the wind. Such then was Hetty's intention, and she landed on the extremity of the gravelly point, beneath an overhanging oak, with the express intention of shoving the canoe off from the shore, in order that it might drift up towards her father's insulated abode. She knew, too, from the logs that occasionally floated about the lake, that did it miss the castle and its appendages the wind would be likely to change before the canoe could reach the northern extremity of the lake, and that Deerslayer might have an opportunity of regaining it in the morning, when no doubt he would be earnestly sweeping the surface of the water, and the whole of its wooded shores, with glass. In all this, too, Hetty was less governed by any chain of reasoning than by her habits, the latter often supplying the place of mind, in human beings, as they perform the same for animals of the inferior classes.

The girl was quite an hour finding her way to the point, the distance and the obscurity equally detaining her, but she was no sooner on the gravelly beach than she prepared to set the canoe adrift, in the manner mentioned. While in the act of pushing it from her, she heard low voices that seemed to come among the trees behind her. Startled at this unexpected danger Hetty was on the point of springing into the canoe in order to seek safety in flight, when she thought she recognized the tones of Judith's melodious voice. Bending forward so as to catch the sounds more directly, they evidently came from the water, and then she understood that the Ark was approaching from the south, and so close in with the western shore, as necessarily to cause it to pass the point within twenty yards of the spot where she stood. Here, then, was all she could desire; the canoe was shoved off into the lake, leaving its late occupant alone on the narrow strand.

When this act of self-devotion was performed, Hetty did not retire. The foliage of the overhanging trees and bushes would have almost concealed her person, had there been light, but in that obscurity it was utterly impossible to discover any object thus shaded, at the distance of a few feet. Flight, too, was perfectly easy, as twenty steps would effectually bury her in the forest. She remained, therefore, watching with intense anxiety the result of her expedient, intending to call the attention of the others to the canoe with her voice, should they appear to pass without observing it. The Ark approached under its sail, again, Deerslayer standing in its bow, with Judith near him, and the Delaware at the helm. It would seem that in the bay below it had got too close to the shore, in the lingering hope of intercepting Hetty, for, as it came nearer, the latter distinctly heard the directions that the young man forward gave to his companion aft, in order to clear the point.

"Lay her head more off the shore, Delaware," said Deerslayer for the third time, speaking in English that his fair companion might understand his words — "Lay her head well off shore. We have got embayed here, and needs keep the mast clear of the trees. Judith, there's a canoe!"

The last words were uttered with great earnestness, and Deerslayer's hand was on his rifle ere they were fairly out of his mouth. But the truth flashed on the mind of the quick-witted girl, and she instantly told her companion that the boat

must be that in which her sister had fled.

"Keep the scow straight, Delaware; steer as straight as your bullet flies when sent ag'in a buck; there — I have it."

The canoe was seized, and immediately secured again to the side of the Ark. At the next moment the sail was lowered, and the motion of the Ark arrested by means of the oars.

"Hetty!" called out Judith, concern, even affection betraying itself in her tones. "Are you within hearing, sister — for God's sake answer, and let me hear the sound of your voice, again! Hetty! — dear Hetty."

"I'm here, Judith — here on the shore, where it will be useless to follow me, as I will hide in the woods."

"Oh! Hetty what is't you do! Remember 'tis drawing near midnight, and that the woods are filled with savages and wild beasts!"

"Neither will harm a poor half-witted girl, Judith. God is as much with me, here, as he would be in the Ark or in the hut. I am going to help my father, and poor Hurry Harry, who will be tortured and slain unless some one cares for them."

"We all care for them, and intend to-morrow to send them a flag of truce, to buy their ransom. Come back then, sister; trust to us, who have better heads than you, and who will do all we can for father."

"I know your head is better than mine, Judith, for mine is very weak, to be sure; but I must go to father and poor Hurry. Do you and Deerslayer keep the castle, sister; leave me in the hands of God."

"God is with us all, Hetty — in the castle, or on the shore — father as well as ourselves, and it is sinful not to trust to his goodness. You can do nothing in the dark; will lose your way in the forest, and perish for want of food."

"God will not let that happen to a poor child that goes to serve her father, sister. I must try and find the savages."

"Come back for this night only; in the morning, we will put you ashore, and leave you to do as you may think right."

"You say so, Judith, and you think so; but you would not. Your heart would soften, and you'd see tomahawks and scalping knives in the air. Besides, I've got a thing to tell the Indian chief that will answer all our wishes, and I'm afraid I may forget it, if I don't tell it to him at once. You'll see that he will let father go, as soon as he hears it!"

"Poor Hetty! What can you say to a ferocious savage that will be likely to change his bloody purpose!"

"That which will frighten him, and make him let father go —" returned the simple-minded girl, positively. "You'll see, sister; you'll see, how soon it will bring him to, like a gentle child!"

"Will you tell me, Hetty, what you intend to say?" asked Deerslayer. "I know the savages well, and can form some idee how far fair words will be likely, or not, to work on their bloody natur's. If it's not suited to the gifts of a red-skin, 'twill be of no use; for reason goes by gifts, as well as conduct."

"Well, then," answered Hetty, dropping her voice to a low, confidential, tone, for the stillness of the night, and the nearness of the Ark, permitted her to do this and still to be heard — "Well, then, Deerslayer, as you seem a good and honest young man I will tell you. I mean not to say a word to any of the savages until I get face to face with their head chief, let them plague me with as many questions as they please I'll answer none of them, unless it be to tell them to lead me to their wisest man — Then, Deerslayer, I'll tell him that God will not forgive murder, and thefts; and that if father and Hurry did go after the scalps of the Iroquois, he must return good for evil, for so the Bible commands, else he will go into everlasting punishment. When he hears this, and feels it to be true, as feel it he must, how long will it be before he sends father, and Hurry, and me to the shore, opposite the castle, telling us all three to go our way in peace?"

The last question was put in a triumphant manner, and then the simple-minded girl laughed at the impression she never doubted that her project had made on her auditors. Deerslayer was dumb-founded at this proof of guileless feebleness of mind, but Judith had suddenly bethought her of a means of counteracting this wild project, by acting on the very feelings that had given it birth. Without adverting to the closing question, or the laugh, therefore, she hurriedly called to her sister by name, as one suddenly impressed with the importance of what she had to say. But no answer was given to the call.

By the snapping of twigs, and the rustling of leaves, Hetty had evidently quitted the shore, and was already burying herself in the forest. To follow would have been fruitless, since the darkness, as well as the dense cover that the woods everywhere offered, would have rendered her capture next to impossible, and there was also the never ceasing danger of falling into the hands of their enemies. After a short and melancholy discussion, therefore, the sail was again set, and the Ark pursued its course towards its habitual moorings, Deerslayer silently felicitating himself on the recovery of the canoe,

and brooding over his plans for the morrow. The wind rose as the party quitted the point, and in less than an hour they reached the castle. Here all was found as it had been left, and the reverse of the ceremonies had to be taken in entering the building, that had been used on quitting it. Judith occupied a solitary bed that night bedewing the pillow with her tears, as she thought of the innocent and hitherto neglected creature, who had been her companion from childhood, and bitter regrets came over her mind, from more causes than one, as the weary hours passed away, making it nearly morning before she lost her recollection in sleep. Deerslayer and the Delaware took their rest in the Ark, where we shall leave them enjoying the deep sleep of the honest, the healthful and fearless, to return to the girl we have last seen in the midst of the forest.

When Hetty left the shore, she took her way unhesitatingly into the woods, with a nervous apprehension of being followed. Luckily, this course was the best she could have hit on to effect her own purpose, since it was the only one that led her from the point. The night was so intensely dark, beneath the branches of the trees, that her progress was very slow, and the direction she went altogether a matter of chance, after the first few yards. The formation of the ground, however, did not permit her to deviate far from the line in which she desired to proceed. On one hand it was soon bounded by the acclivity of the hill, while the lake, on the other, served as a guide. For two hours did this single-hearted and simple-minded girl toil through the mazes of the forest, sometimes finding herself on the brow of the bank that bounded the water, and at others struggling up an ascent that warned her to go no farther in that direction, since it necessarily ran at right angles to the course on which she wished to proceed. Her feet often slid from beneath her, and she got many falls, though none to do her injury; but, by the end of the period mentioned, she had become so weary as to want strength to go any farther. Rest was indispensable, and she set about preparing a bed, with the readiness and coolness of one to whom the wilderness presented no unnecessary terrors. She knew that wild beasts roamed through all the adjacent forest, but animals that preyed on the human species were rare, and of dangerous serpents there were literally none. These facts had been taught her by her father, and whatever her feeble mind received at all, it received so confidently as to leave her no uneasiness from any doubts, or scepticism. To her the sublimity of the solitude in which she was placed, was soothing, rather than appalling, and she gathered a bed of leaves, with as much indifference to the circumstances that would have driven the thoughts of sleep entirely from the minds of most of her sex, as if she had been preparing her place of nightly rest beneath the paternal roof. As soon as Hetty had collected a sufficient number of the dried leaves to protect her person from the damps of the ground, she knelt beside the humble pile, clasped her raised hands in an attitude of deep devotion, and in a soft, low, but audible voice repeated the Lord's Prayer. This was followed by those simple and devout verses, so familiar to children, in which she recommended her soul to God, should it be called away to another state of existence, ere the return of morning. This duty done, she lay down and disposed herself to sleep. The attire of the girl, though suited to the season, was sufficiently warm for all ordinary purposes, but the forest is ever cool, and the nights of that elevated region of country, have always a freshness about them, that renders clothing more necessary than is commonly the case in the summers of a low latitude. This had been foreseen by Hetty, who had brought with her a coarse heavy mantle, which, when laid over her body, answered all the useful purposes of a blanket. Thus protected, she dropped asleep in a few minutes, as tranquilly as if watched over by the guardian care of that mother, who had so recently been taken from her forever, affording in this particular a most striking contrast between her own humble couch, and the sleepless pillow of her sister.

Hour passed after hour, in a tranquility as undisturbed and a rest as sweet as if angels, expressly commissioned for that object, watched around the bed of Hetty Hutter. Not once did her soft eyes open, until the grey of the dawn came struggling through the tops of the trees, falling on their lids, and, united to the freshness of a summer's morning, giving the usual summons to awake. Ordinarily, Hetty was up ere the rays of the sun tipped the summits of the mountains, but on this occasion her fatigue had been so great, and her rest was so profound, that the customary warnings failed of their effect. The girl murmured in her sleep, threw an arm forward, smiled as gently as an infant in its cradle, but still slumbered. In making this unconscious gesture, her hand fell on some object that was warm, and in the half unconscious state in which she lay, she connected the circumstance with her habits. At the next moment, a rude attack was made on her side, as if a rooting animal were thrusting its snout beneath, with a desire to force her position, and then, uttering the name of "Judith" she awoke. As the startled girl arose to a sitting attitude she perceived that some dark object sprang from her, scattering the leaves and snapping the fallen twigs in its haste. Opening her eyes, and recovering from the first confusion and astonishment of her situation, Hetty perceived a cub, of the common American brown bear, balancing itself on its hinder

legs, and still looking towards her, as if doubtful whether it would be safe to trust itself near her person again. The first impulse of Hetty, who had been mistress of several of these cubs, was to run and seize the little creature as a prize, but a loud growl warned her of the danger of such a procedure. Recoiling a few steps, the girl looked hurriedly round, and perceived the dam, watching her movements with fiery eyes at no great distance. A hollow tree, that once been the home of bees, having recently fallen, the mother with two more cubs was feasting on the dainty food that this accident had placed within her reach; while the first kept a jealous eye on the situation of its truant and reckless young.

It would exceed all the means of human knowledge to presume to analyze the influences that govern the acts of the lower animals. On this occasion, the dam, though proverbially fierce when its young is thought to be in danger, manifested no intention to attack the girl. It quitted the honey, and advanced to a place within twenty feet of her, where it raised itself on its hind legs and balanced its body in a sort of angry, growling discontent, but approached no nearer. Happily, Hetty did not fly. On the contrary, though not without terror, she knelt with her face towards the animal, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, repeated the prayer of the previous night. This act of devotion was not the result of alarm, but it was a duty she never neglected to perform ere she slept, and when the return of consciousness awoke her to the business of the day. As the girl arose from her knees, the bear dropped on its feet again, and collecting its cubs around her, permitted them to draw their natural sustenance. Hetty was delighted with this proof of tenderness in an animal that has but a very indifferent reputation for the gentler feelings, and as a cub would quit its mother to frisk and leap about in wantonness, she felt a strong desire again to catch it up in her arms, and play with it. But admonished by the growl, she had self-command sufficient not to put this dangerous project in execution, and recollecting her errand among the hills, she tore herself away from the group, and proceeded on her course along the margin of the lake, of which she now caught glimpses again through the trees. To her surprise, though not to her alarm, the family of bears arose and followed her steps, keeping a short distance behind her; apparently watching every movement as if they had a near interest in all she did.

In this manner, escorted by the dam and cubs, the girl proceeded nearly a mile, thrice the distance she had been able to achieve in the darkness, during the same period of time. She then reached a brook that had dug a channel for itself into the earth, and went brawling into the lake, between steep and high banks, covered with trees. Here Hetty performed her ablutions; then drinking of the pure mountain water, she went her way, refreshed and lighter of heart, still attended by her singular companions. Her course now lay along a broad and nearly level terrace, which stretched from the top of the bank that bounded the water, to a low acclivity that rose to a second and irregular platform above. This was at a part of the valley where the mountains ran obliquely, forming the commencement of a plain that spread between the hills, southward of the sheet of water. Hetty knew, by this circumstance, that she was getting near to the encampment, and had she not, the bears would have given her warning of the vicinity of human beings. Snuffing the air, the dam refused to follow any further, though the girl looked back and invited her to come by childish signs, and even by direct appeals made in her own sweet voice. It was while making her way slowly through some bushes, in this manner, with averted face and eyes riveted on the immovable animals, that the girl suddenly found her steps arrested by a human hand, that was laid lightly on her shoulder.

"Where go? —" said a soft female voice, speaking hurriedly, and in concern. — "Indian — red man savage — wicked warrior — thataway."

This unexpected salutation alarmed the girl no more than the presence of the fierce inhabitants of the woods. It took her a little by surprise, it is true, but she was in a measure prepared for some such meeting, and the creature who stopped her was as little likely to excite terror as any who ever appeared in the guise of an Indian. It was a girl, not much older than herself, whose smile was sunny as Judith's in her brightest moments, whose voice was melody itself, and whose accents and manner had all the rebuked gentleness that characterizes the sex among a people who habitually treat their women as the attendants and servitors of the warriors. Beauty among the women of the aboriginal Americans, before they have become exposed to the hardships of wives and mothers, is by no means uncommon. In this particular, the original owners of the country were not unlike their more civilized successors, nature appearing to have bestowed that delicacy of mien and outline that forms so great a charm in the youthful female, but of which they are so early deprived; and that, too, as much by the habits of domestic life as from any other cause.

The girl who had so suddenly arrested the steps of Hetty was dressed in a calico mantle that effectually protected all the upper part of her person, while a short petticoat of blue cloth edged with gold lace, that fell no lower than her knees, leggings of the same, and moccasins of deer-skin, completed her attire. Her hair fell in long dark braids down her shoulders and back, and was parted above a low smooth forehead, in a way to soften the expression of eyes that were full of



archness and natural feeling. Her face was oval, with delicate features, the teeth were even and white, while the mouth expressed a melancholy tenderness, as if it wore this peculiar meaning in intuitive perception of the fate of a being who was doomed from birth to endure a woman's sufferings, relieved by a woman's affections. Her voice, as has been already intimated, was soft as the sighing of the night air, a characteristic of the females of her race, but which was so conspicuous in herself as to have produced for her the name of Wah-ta-Wah; which rendered into English means Hist-oh-Hist.

In a word, this was the betrothed of Chingachgook, who — having succeeded in lulling their suspicions, was permitted to wander around the encampment of her captors. This indulgence was in accordance with the general policy of the red man, who well knew, moreover, that her trail could have been easily followed in the event of flight. It will also be remembered that the Iroquois, or Hurons, as it would be better to call them, were entirely ignorant of the proximity of her lover, a fact, indeed, that she did not know herself.

It is not easy to say which manifested the most self-possession at this unexpected meeting; the pale-face, or the red girl. But, though a little surprised, Wah-ta-Wah was the most willing to speak, and far the readier in foreseeing consequences, as well as in devising means to avert them. Her father, during her childhood, had been much employed as a warrior by the authorities of the Colony, and dwelling for several years near the forts, she had caught a knowledge of the English tongue, which she spoke in the usual, abbreviated manner of an Indian, but fluently, and without any of the ordinary reluctance of her people.

"Where go? —" repeated Wah-ta-Wah, returning the smile of Hetty, in her own gentle, winning, manner — "wicked warrior that-a-way — good warrior, far off."

"What's your name?" asked Hetty, with the simplicity of a child.

"Wah-ta-Wah. I no Mingo — good Delaware — Yengeese friend. Mingo cruel, and love scalp, for blood — Delaware love him, for honor. Come here, where no eyes."

Wah-ta-Wah now led her companion towards the lake, descending the bank so as to place its overhanging trees and bushes between them and any probable observers. Nor did she stop until they were both seated, side by side, on a fallen log, one end of which actually lay buried in the water.

"Why you come for?" the young Indian eagerly inquired — "Where you come for?" Hetty told her tale in her own simple and truth-loving manner. She explained the situation of her father, and stated her desire to serve him, and if possible to procure his release.

"Why your father come to Mingo camp in night?" asked the Indian girl, with a directness, which if not borrowed from the other, partook largely of its sincerity. "He know it war-time, and he no boy — he no want beard — no want to be told Iroquois carry tomahawk, and knife, and rifle. Why he come night time, seize me by hair, and try to scalp Delaware girl?"

"You!" said Hetty, almost sickening with horror — "Did he seize you — did he try to scalp you?"

"Why no? Delaware scalp sell for much as Mingo scalp. Governor no tell difference. Wicked t'ing for pale-face to scalp. No his gifts, as the good Deerslayer always tell me."

"And do you know the Deerslayer?" said Hetty, coloring with delight and surprise; forgetting her regrets, at the moment, in the influence of this new feeling. "I know him, too. He is now in the Ark, with Judith and a Delaware who is called the Big Serpent. A bold and handsome warrior is this Serpent, too!"

Spite of the rich deep colour that nature had bestowed on the Indian beauty, the tell-tale blood deepened on her cheeks, until the blush gave new animation and intelligence to her jet-black eyes. Raising a finger in an attitude of warning, she dropped her voice, already so soft and sweet, nearly to a whisper, as she continued the discourse.

"Chingachgook!" returned the Delaware girl, sighing out the harsh name, in sounds so softly guttural, as to cause it to reach the ear in melody — "His father, Uncas — great chief of the Mahicanni — next to old Tamenund! — More as warrior, not so much gray hair, and less at Council Fire. You know Serpent?"

"He joined us last evening, and was in the Ark with me, for two or three hours before I left it. I'm afraid, Hist —" Hetty could not pronounce the Indian name of her new friend, but having heard Deerslayer give her this familiar appellation, she used it without any of the ceremony of civilized life — "I'm afraid Hist, he has come after scalps, as well as my poor father and Hurry Harry."

"Why he shouldn't — ha? Chingachgook red warrior — very red — scalp make his honor — Be sure he take him."

“Then,” said Hetty, earnestly, “he will be as wicked as any other. God will not pardon in a red man, what he will not pardon in a white man.

“No true —” returned the Delaware girl, with a warmth that nearly amounted to passion. “No true, I tell you! The Manitou smile and pleased when he see young warrior come back from the war path, with two, ten, hundred scalp on a pole! Chingachgook father take scalp — grandfather take scalp — all old chief take scalp, and Chingachgook take as many scalp as he can carry, himself.”

“Then, Hist, his sleep of nights must be terrible to think of. No one can be cruel, and hope to be forgiven.”

“No cruel — plenty forgiven —” returned Wah-ta-Wah, stamping her little foot on the stony strand, and shaking her head in a way to show how completely feminine feeling, in one of its aspects, had gotten the better of feminine feeling in another. “I tell you, Serpent brave; he go home, this time, with four — yes — two scalp.”

“And is that his errand, here? — Did he really come all this distance, across mountain, and valley, rivers and lakes, to torment his fellow creatures, and do so wicked a thing?”

This question at once appeased the growing ire of the half-offended Indian beauty. It completely got the better of the prejudices of education, and turned all her thoughts to a gentler and more feminine channel. At first, she looked around her, suspiciously, as if distrusting eavesdroppers; then she gazed wistfully into the face of her attentive companion; after which this exhibition of girlish coquetry and womanly feeling, terminated by her covering her face with both her hands, and laughing in a strain that might well be termed the melody of the woods. Dread of discovery, however, soon put a stop to this naive exhibition of feeling, and removing her hands, this creature of impulses gazed again wistfully into the face of her companion, as if inquiring how far she might trust a stranger with her secret. Although Hetty had no claims to her sister’s extraordinary beauty, many thought her countenance the most winning of the two. It expressed all the undisguised sincerity of her character, and it was totally free from any of the unpleasant physical accompaniments that so frequently attend mental imbecility. It is true that one accustomed to closer observations than common, might have detected the proofs of her feebleness of intellect in the language of her sometimes vacant eyes, but they were signs that attracted sympathy by their total want of guile, rather than by any other feeling. The effect on Hist, to use the English and more familiar translation of the name, was favorable, and yielding to an impulse of tenderness, she threw her arms around Hetty, and embraced her with an outpouring emotion, so natural that it was only equaled by its warmth.

“You good —” whispered the young Indian — “you good, I know; it so long since Wah-ta-Wah have a friend — a sister — any body to speak her heart to! You Hist friend; don’t I say trut’?”

“I never had a friend,” answered Hetty returning the warm embrace with unfeigned earnestness. “I’ve a sister, but no friend. Judith loves me, and I love Judith; but that’s natural, and as we are taught in the Bible — but I should like to have a friend! I’ll be your friend, with all my heart, for I like your voice and your smile, and your way of thinking in every thing, except about the scalps —”

“No t’ink more of him — no say more of scalp —” interrupted Hist, soothingly — “You pale-face, I red-skin; we bring up different fashion. Deerslayer and Chingachgook great friend, and no the same colour, Hist and — what your name, pretty pale-face?”

“I am called Hetty, though when they spell the name in the bible, they always spell it Esther.”

“What that make? — no good, no harm. No need to spell name at all — Moravian try to make Wah-ta-Wah spell, but no won’t let him. No good for Delaware girl to know too much — know more than warrior some time; that great shame. My name Wah-ta-Wah that say Hist in your tongue; you call him, Hist — I call him, Hetty.”

These preliminaries settled to their mutual satisfaction, the two girls began to discourse of their several hopes and projects. Hetty made her new friend more fully acquainted with her intentions in behalf of her father, and, to one in the least addicted to prying into the affairs, Hist would have betrayed her own feelings and expectations in connection with the young warrior of her own tribe. Enough was revealed on both sides, however, to let each party get a tolerable insight into the views of the other, though enough still remained in mental reservation, to give rise to the following questions and answers, with which the interview in effect closed. As the quickest witted, Hist was the first with her interrogatories. Folding an arm about the waist of Hetty, she bent her head so as to look up playfully into the face of the other, and, laughing, as if her meaning were to be extracted from her looks, she spoke more plainly.

“Hetty got broder, as well as fader? —” she said — “Why no talk of broder, as well as fader?”

"I have no brother, Hist. I had one once, they say, but he is dead many a year, and lies buried in the lake, by the side of my mother."

"No got broder — got a young warrior — Love him, almost as much as fader, eh? Very handsome, and brave-looking; fit to be chief, if he good as he seem to be."

"It's wicked to love any man as well as I love my father, and so I strive not to do it, Hist," returned the conscientious Hetty, who knew not how to conceal an emotion, by an approach to an untruth as venial as an evasion, though powerfully tempted by female shame to err, "though I sometimes think wickedness will get the better of me, if Hurry comes so often to the lake. I must tell you the truth, dear Hist, because you ask me, but I should fall down and die in the woods, if he knew it!"

"Why he no ask you, himself? — Brave looking — why not bold speaking? Young warrior ought to ask young girl, no make young girl speak first. Mingo girls too shame for that."

This was said indignantly, and with the generous warmth a young female of spirit would be apt to feel, at what she deemed an invasion of her sex's most valued privilege. It had little influence on the simple-minded, but also just-minded Hetty, who, though inherently feminine in all her impulses, was much more alive to the workings of her own heart, than to any of the usages with which convention has protected the sensitiveness of her sex.

"Ask me what?" the startled girl demanded, with a suddenness that proved how completely her fears had been aroused. 'Ask me, if I like him as well as I do my own father! Oh! I hope he will never put such a question to me, for I should have to answer, and that would kill me!"

"No — no — no kill, quite — almost," returned the other, laughing in spite of herself. "Make blush come — make shame come too; but he no stay great while; then feel happier than ever. Young warrior must tell young girl he want to make wife, else never can live in his wigwam."

"Hurry don't want to marry me — nobody will ever want to marry me, Hist."

"How you can know? P'raps every body want to marry you, and by-and-bye, tongue say what heart feel. Why nobody want to marry you?"

"I am not full witted, they say. Father often tells me this; and so does Judith, sometimes, when she is vexed; but I shouldn't so much mind them, as I did mother. She said so once and then she cried as if her heart would break; and, so, I know I'm not full witted."

Hist gazed at the gentle, simple girl, for quite a minute without speaking, and then the truth appeared to flash all at once on the mind of the young Indian maid. Pity, reverence and tenderness seemed struggling together in her breast, and then rising suddenly, she indicated a wish to her companion that she would accompany her to the camp, which was situated at no great distance. This unexpected change from the precautions that Hist had previously manifested a desire to use, in order to prevent being seen, to an open exposure of the person of her friend, arose from the perfect conviction that no Indian would harm a being whom the Great Spirit had disarmed, by depriving it of its strongest defence, reason. In this respect, nearly all unsophisticated nations resemble each other, appearing to offer spontaneously, by a feeling creditable to human nature, that protection by their own forbearance, which has been withheld by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence. Wah-ta-Wah, indeed, knew that in many tribes the mentally imbecile and the mad were held in a species of religious reverence, receiving from these untutored inhabitants of the forest respect and honors, instead of the contumely and neglect that it is their fortune to meet with among the more pretending and sophisticated.

Hetty accompanied her new friend without apprehension or reluctance. It was her wish to reach the camp, and, sustained by her motives, she felt no more concern for the consequences than did her companion herself, now the latter was apprised of the character of the protection that the pale-face maiden carried with her. Still, as they proceeded slowly along a shore that was tangled with overhanging bushes, Hetty continued the discourse, assuming the office of interrogating which the other had instantly dropped, as soon as she ascertained the character of the mind to which her questions had been addressed.

"But you are not half-witted," said Hetty, "and there's no reason why the Serpent should not marry you."

"Hist prisoner, and Mingo got big ear. No speak of Chingachgook when they by. Promise Hist that, good Hetty."

"I know — I know —" returned Hetty, half-whispering, in her eagerness to let the other see she understood the necessity of caution. "I know — Deerslayer and the Serpent mean to get you away from the Iroquois, and you wish me not

to tell the secret.”

“How you know?” said Hist, hastily, vexed at the moment that the other was not even more feeble minded than was actually the case. “How you know? Better not talk of any but fader and Hurry — Mingo understand dat; he no understand t’udder. Promise you no talk about what you no understand.”

“But I do understand this, Hist, and so I must talk about it. Deerslayer as good as told father all about it, in my presence, and as nobody told me not to listen, I overheard it all, as I did Hurry and father’s discourse about the scalps.”

“Very bad for pale-faces to talk about scalps, and very bad for young woman to hear! Now you love Hist, I know, Hetty, and so, among Injins, when love hardest never talk most.”

“That’s not the way among white people, who talk most about them they love best. I suppose it’s because I’m only half-witted that I don’t see the reason why it should be so different among red people.”

“That what Deerslayer call gift. One gift to talk; t’udder gift to hold tongue. Hold tongue your gift, among Mingos. If Sarpent want to see Hist, so Hetty want to see Hurry. Good girl never tell secret of friend.”

Hetty understood this appeal, and she promised the Delaware girl not to make any allusion to the presence of Chingachgook, or to the motive of his visit to the lake.

“Maybe he get off Hurry and fader, as well as Hist, if let him have his way,” whispered Wah-ta-Wah to her companion, in a confiding flattering way, just as they got near enough to the encampment to hear the voices of several of their own sex, who were apparently occupied in the usual toils of women of their class. “Tink of dat, Hetty, and put two, twenty finger on mouth. No get friend free without Sarpent do it.”

A better expedient could not have been adopted, to secure the silence and discretion of Hetty, than that which was now presented to her mind. As the liberation of her father and the young frontier man was the great object of her adventure, she felt the connection between it and the services of the Delaware, and with an innocent laugh, she nodded her head, and in the same suppressed manner, promised a due attention to the wishes of her friend. Thus assured, Hist tarried no longer, but immediately and openly led the way into the encampment of her captors.



## CHAPTER 11

*"The great King of Kings  
Hath in the table of his law commanded,  
That thou shalt do no murder.  
Take heed; for he holds vengeance in his hand,  
To hurl upon their heads that break his law."*

—RICHARD III, I.IV.195–97 199–200.

That the party to which Hist compulsorily belonged was not one that was regularly on the war path, was evident by the presence of females. It was a small fragment of a tribe that had been hunting and fishing within the English limits, where it was found by the commencement of hostilities, and, after passing the winter and spring by living on what was strictly the property of its enemies, it chose to strike a hostile blow before it finally retired. There was also deep Indian sagacity in the manoeuvre which had led them so far into the territory of their foes. When the runner arrived who announced the breaking out of hostilities between the English and French — a struggle that was certain to carry with it all the tribes that dwelt within the influence of the respective belligerents — this particular party of the Iroquois were posted on the shores of the Oneida, a lake that lies some fifty miles nearer to their own frontier than that which is the scene of our tale.

To have fled in a direct line for the Canadas would have exposed them to the dangers of a direct pursuit, and the chiefs had determined to adopt the expedient of penetrating deeper into a region that had now become dangerous, in the hope of being able to retire in the rear of their pursuers, instead of having them on their trail. The presence of the women had induced the attempt at this ruse, the strength of these feeble members of the party being unequal to the effort of escaping from the pursuit of warriors. When the reader remembers the vast extent of the American wilderness, at that early day, he will perceive that it was possible for even a tribe to remain months undiscovered in particular portions of it; nor was the danger of encountering a foe, the usual precautions being observed, as great in the woods, as it is on the high seas, in a time of active warfare.

The encampment being temporary, it offered to the eye no more than the rude protection of a bivouac, relieved in some slight degree by the ingenious expedients which suggested themselves to the readiness of those who passed their lives amid similar scenes. One fire, that had been kindled against the roots of a living oak, sufficed for the whole party; the weather being too mild to require it for any purpose but cooking. Scattered around this centre of attraction, were some fifteen or twenty low huts, or perhaps kennels would be a better word, into which their different owners crept at night, and which were also intended to meet the exigencies of a storm.

These little huts were made of the branches of trees, put together with some ingenuity, and they were uniformly topped with bark that had been stripped from fallen trees; of which every virgin forest possesses hundreds, in all stages of decay. Of furniture they had next to none. Cooking utensils of the simplest sort were lying near the fire, a few articles of clothing were to be seen in or around the huts, rifles, horns, and pouches leaned against the trees, or were suspended from the lower branches, and the carcasses of two or three deer were stretched to view on the same natural shambles.

As the encampment was in the midst of a dense wood, the eye could not take in its tout ensemble at a glance, but hut after hut started out of the gloomy picture, as one gazed about him in quest of objects. There was no centre, unless the fire might be so considered, no open area where the possessors of this rude village might congregate, but all was dark, covert and cunning, like its owners. A few children strayed from hut to hut, giving the spot a little of the air of domestic life, and the suppressed laugh and low voices of the women occasionally broke in upon the deep stillness of the sombre forest. As for the men, they either ate, slept, or examined their arms. They conversed but little, and then usually apart, or in groups withdrawn from the females, whilst an air of untiring, innate watchfulness and apprehension of danger seemed to be blended even with their slumbers.

As the two girls came near the encampment, Hetty uttered a slight exclamation, on catching a view of the person of her father. He was seated on the ground with his back to a tree, and Hurry stood near him indolently whittling a twig. Apparently they were as much at liberty as any others in or about the camp, and one unaccustomed to Indian usages would have mistaken them for visitors, instead of supposing them to be captives. Wah-ta-Wah led her new friend quite near them, and then modestly withdrew, that her own presence might be no restraint on her feelings. But Hetty was not

sufficiently familiar with caresses or outward demonstrations of fondness, to indulge in any outbreking of feeling. She merely approached and stood at her father's side without speaking, resembling a silent statue of filial affection. The old man expressed neither alarm nor surprise at her sudden appearance. In these particulars he had caught the stoicism of the Indians, well knowing that there was no more certain mode of securing their respect than by imitating their self-command. Nor did the savages themselves betray the least sign of surprise at this sudden appearance of a stranger among them. In a word, this arrival produced much less visible sensation, though occurring under circumstances so peculiar, than would be seen in a village of higher pretensions to civilization did an ordinary traveler drive up to the door of its principal inn.

Still a few warriors collected, and it was evident by the manner in which they glanced at Hetty as they conversed together, that she was the subject of their discourse, and probable that the reasons of her unlooked-for appearance were matters of discussion. This phlegm of manner is characteristic of the North American Indian — some say of his white successor also — but, in this case much should be attributed to the peculiar situation in which the party was placed. The force in the Ark, the presence of Chingachgook excepted, was well known, no tribe or body of troops was believed to be near, and vigilant eyes were posted round the entire lake, watching day and night the slightest movement of those whom it would not be exaggerated now to term the besieged.

Hutter was inwardly much moved by the conduct of Hetty, though he affected so much indifference of manner. He recollected her gentle appeal to him before he left the Ark, and misfortune rendered that of weight which might have been forgotten amid the triumph of success. Then he knew the simple, single-hearted fidelity of his child, and understood why she had come, and the total disregard of self that reigned in all her acts.

"This is not well, Hetty," he said, deprecating the consequences to the girl herself more than any other evil. "These are fierce Iroquois, and are as little apt to forget an injury, as a favor."

"Tell me, father —" returned the girl, looking furtively about her as if fearful of being overheard, "did God let you do the cruel errand on which you came? I want much to know this, that I may speak to the Indians plainly, if he did not."

"You should not have come hither, Hetty; these brutes will not understand your nature or your intentions!"

"How was it, father; neither you nor Hurry seems to have any thing that looks like scalps."

"If that will set your mind at peace, child, I can answer you, no. I had caught the young creatur' who came here with you, but her screeches soon brought down upon me a troop of the wild cats, that was too much for any single Christian to withstand. If that will do you any good, we are as innocent of having taken a scalp, this time, as I make no doubt we shall also be innocent of receiving the bounty."

"Thank God for that, father! Now I can speak boldly to the Iroquois, and with an easy conscience. I hope Hurry, too, has not been able to harm any of the Indians?"

"Why, as to that matter, Hetty," returned the individual in question, "you've put it pretty much in the natyve character of the religious truth. Hurry has not been able, and that is the long and short of it. I've seen many squalls, old fellow, both on land and on the water, but never did I feel one as lively and as snappish as that which come down upon us, night afore last, in the shape of an Indian hurrah-boys! Why, Hetty, you're no great matter at a reason, or an idee that lies a little deeper than common, but you're human and have some human notions — now I'll just ask you to look at them circumstances. Here was old Tom, your father, and myself, bent on a legal operation, as is to be seen in the words of the law and the proclamation; thinking no harm; when we were set upon by critturs that were more like a pack of hungry wolves than mortal savages even, and there they had us tethered like two sheep, in less time than it has taken me to tell you the story."

"You are free now, Hurry," returned Hetty, glancing timidly at the fine unfettered limbs of the young giant — "You have no cords, or withes, to pain your arms, or legs, now."

"Not I, Hetty. Natur' is natur', and freedom is natur', too. My limbs have a free look, but that's pretty much the amount of it, sin' I can't use them in the way I should like. Even these trees have eyes; ay, and tongues too; for was the old man, here, or I, to start one single rod beyond our gaol limits, sarvice would be put on the bail afore we could 'gird up our loins' for a race, and, like as not, four or five rifle bullets would be travelling arter us, carrying so many invitations to curb our impatience. There isn't a gaol in the colony as tight as this we are now in; for I've tried the vartues of two or three on 'em, and I know the mater'als they are made of, as well as the men that made 'em; takin' down being the next step in schoolin', and puttin' up, in all such fabrications."

Lest the reader should get an exaggerated opinion of Hurry's demerits from this boastful and indiscreet revelation, it may be well to say that his offences were confined to assaults and batteries, for several of which he had been imprisoned, when, as he has just said, he often escaped by demonstrating the flimsiness of the constructions in which he was confined, by opening for himself doors in spots where the architects had neglected to place them. But Hetty had no knowledge of gaols, and little of the nature of crimes, beyond what her unadulterated and almost instinctive perceptions of right and wrong taught her, and this sally of the rude being who had spoken was lost upon her. She understood his general meaning, however, and answered in reference to that alone.

"It's so best, Hurry," she said. "It is best father and you should be quiet and peaceable, 'till I have spoken to the Iroquois, when all will be well and happy. I don't wish either of you to follow, but leave me to myself. As soon as all is settled, and you are at liberty to go back to the castle, I will come and let you know it."

Hetty spoke with so much simple earnestness, seemed so confident of success, and wore so high an air of moral feeling and truth, that both the listeners felt more disposed to attach an importance to her mediation, than might otherwise have happened. When she manifested an intention to quit them, therefore, they offered no obstacle, though they saw she was about to join the group of chiefs who were consulting apart, seemingly on the manner and motive of her own sudden appearance.

When Hist — for so we love best to call her — quitted her companion, she strayed near one or two of the elder warriors, who had shown her most kindness in her captivity, the principal man of whom had even offered to adopt her as his child if she would consent to become a Huron. In taking this direction, the shrewd girl did so to invite inquiry. She was too well trained in the habits of her people to obtrude the opinions of one of her sex and years on men and warriors, but nature had furnished a tact and ingenuity that enabled her to attract the attention she desired, without wounding the pride of those to whom it was her duty to defer and respect. Even her affected indifference stimulated curiosity, and Hetty had hardly reached the side of her father, before the Delaware girl was brought within the circle of the warriors, by a secret but significant gesture. Here she was questioned as to the person of her companion, and the motives that had brought her to the camp. This was all that Hist desired. She explained the manner in which she had detected the weakness of Hetty's reason, rather exaggerating than lessening the deficiency in her intellect, and then she related in general terms the object of the girl in venturing among her enemies. The effect was all that the speaker expected, her account investing the person and character of their visitor with a sacredness and respect that she well knew would prove her protection. As soon as her own purpose was attained, Hist withdrew to a distance, where, with female consideration and a sisterly tenderness she set about the preparation of a meal, to be offered to her new friend as soon as the latter might be at liberty to partake of it. While thus occupied, however, the ready girl in no degree relaxed in her watchfulness, noting every change of countenance among the chiefs, every movement of Hetty's, and the smallest occurrence that could be likely to affect her own interests, or that of her new friend.

As Hetty approached the chiefs they opened their little circle, with an ease and deference of manner that would have done credit to men of more courtly origin. A fallen tree lay near, and the oldest of the warriors made a quiet sign for the girl to be seated on it, taking his place at her side with the gentleness of a father. The others arranged themselves around the two with grave dignity, and then the girl, who had sufficient observation to perceive that such a course was expected of her, began to reveal the object of her visit. The moment she opened her mouth to speak, however, the old chief gave a gentle sign for her to forbear, said a few words to one of his juniors, and then waited in silent patience until the latter had summoned Hist to the party. This interruption proceeded from the chief's having discovered that there existed a necessity for an interpreter, few of the Hurons present understanding the English language, and they but imperfectly.

Wah-ta-Wah was not sorry to be called upon to be present at the interview, and least of all in the character in which she was now wanted. She was aware of the hazards she ran in attempting to deceive one or two of the party, but was none the less resolved to use every means that offered, and to practice every artifice that an Indian education could supply, to conceal the facts of the vicinity of her betrothed, and of the errand on which he had come. One unpracticed in the expedients and opinions of savage life would not have suspected the readiness of invention, the wariness of action, the high resolution, the noble impulses, the deep self-devotion, and the feminine disregard of self when the affections were concerned, that lay concealed beneath the demure looks, the mild eyes, and the sunny smiles of this young Indian beauty. As she approached them, the grim old warriors regarded her with pleasure, for they had a secret pride in the hope of engrafting so rare a scion on the stock of their own nation; adoption being as regularly practised, and as distinctly

recognized among the tribes of America, as it ever had been among those nations that submit to the sway of the Civil Law.

As soon as Hist was seated by the side of Hetty, the old chief desired her to ask “the fair young pale-face” what had brought her among the Iroquois, and what they could do to serve her.

“Tell them, Hist, who I am — Thomas Hutter’s youngest daughter; Thomas Hutter, the oldest of their two prisoners; he who owns the castle and the Ark, and who has the best right to be thought the owner of these hills, and that lake, since he has dwelt so long, and trapped so long, and fished so long, among them — They’ll know whom you mean by Thomas Hutter, if you tell them, that. And then tell them that I’ve come here to convince them they ought not to harm father and Hurry, but let them go in peace, and to treat them as brethren rather than as enemies. Now tell them all this plainly, Hist, and fear nothing for yourself or me. God will protect us.”

Wah-ta-Wah did as the other desired, taking care to render the words of her friend as literally as possible into the Iroquois tongue, a language she used with a readiness almost equal to that with which she spoke her own. The chiefs heard this opening explanation with grave decorum, the two who had a little knowledge of English intimating their satisfaction with the interpreter by furtive but significant glances of the eyes.

“And, now, Hist,” continued Hetty, as soon as it was intimated to her that she might proceed, “and, now, Hist, I wish you to tell these red men, word for word, what I am about to say. Tell them first, that father and Hurry came here with an intention to take as many scalps as they could, for the wicked governor and the province have offered money for scalps, whether of warriors, or women, men or children, and the love of gold was too strong for their hearts to withstand it. Tell them this, dear Hist, just as you have heard it from me, word for word.”

Wah-ta-Wah hesitated about rendering this speech as literally as had been desired, but detecting the intelligence of those who understood English, and apprehending even a greater knowledge than they actually possessed she found herself compelled to comply. Contrary to what a civilized man would have expected, the admission of the motives and of the errands of their prisoners produced no visible effect on either the countenances or the feelings of the listeners. They probably considered the act meritorious, and that which neither of them would have hesitated to perform in his own person, he would not be apt to censure in another.

“And, now, Hist,” resumed Hetty, as soon as she perceived that her first speeches were understood by the chiefs, “you can tell them more. They know that father and Hurry did not succeed, and therefore they can bear them no grudge for any harm that has been done. If they had slain their children and wives it would not alter the matter, and I’m not certain that what I am about to tell them would not have more weight had there been mischief done. But ask them first, Hist, if they know there is a God, who reigns over the whole earth, and is ruler and chief of all who live, let them be red, or white, or what color they may?”

Wah-ta-Wah looked a little surprised at this question, for the idea of the Great Spirit is seldom long absent from the mind of an Indian girl. She put the question as literally as possible, however, and received a grave answer in the affirmative.

“This is right,” continued Hetty, “and my duty will now be light. This Great Spirit, as you call our God, has caused a book to be written, that we call a Bible, and in this book have been set down all his commandments, and his holy will and pleasure, and the rules by which all men are to live, and directions how to govern the thoughts even, and the wishes, and the will. Here, this is one of these holy books, and you must tell the chiefs what I am about to read to them from its sacred pages.”

As Hetty concluded, she reverently unrolled a small English Bible from its envelope of coarse calico, treating the volume with the sort of external respect that a Romanist would be apt to show to a religious relic. As she slowly proceeded in her task the grim warriors watched each movement with riveted eyes, and when they saw the little volume appear a slight expression of surprise escaped one or two of them. But Hetty held it out towards them in triumph, as if she expected the sight would produce a visible miracle, and then, without betraying either surprise or mortification at the Stoicism of the Indian, she turned eagerly to her new friend, in order to renew the discourse.

“This is the sacred volume, Hist,” she said — “and these words, and lines, and verses, and chapters, all came from God.”

“Why Great Spirit no send book to Injin, too?” demanded Hist, with the directness of a mind that was totally unsophisticated.

“Why?” answered Hetty, a little bewildered by a question so unexpected. “Why? — Ah! you know the Indians don’t



know how to read."

If Hist was not satisfied with this explanation, she did not deem the point of sufficient importance to be pressed. Simply bending her body, in a gentle admission of the truth of what she heard, she sat patiently awaiting the further arguments of the pale-face enthusiast.

"You can tell these chiefs that throughout this book, men are ordered to forgive their enemies; to treat them as they would brethren; and never to injure their fellow creatures, more especially on account of revenge or any evil passions. Do you think you can tell them this, so that they will understand it, Hist?"

"Tell him well enough, but he no very easy to understand." Hist then conveyed the ideas of Hetty, in the best manner she could, to the attentive Indians, who heard her words with some such surprise as an American of our own times would be apt to betray at a suggestion that the great modern but vacillating ruler of things human, public opinion, might be wrong. One or two of their number, however, having met with missionaries, said a few words in explanation, and then the group gave all its attention to the communications that were to follow. Before Hetty resumed she inquired earnestly of Hist if the chiefs had understood her, and receiving an evasive answer, was fain to be satisfied.

"I will now read to the warriors some of the verses that it is good for them to know," continued the girl, whose manner grew more solemn and earnest as she proceeded—"and they will remember that they are the very words of the Great Spirit. First, then, ye are commanded to 'love thy neighbor as Thyself.' Tell them that, dear Hist."

"Neighbor, for Injin, no mean pale-face," answered the Delaware girl, with more decision than she had hitherto thought it necessary to use. "Neighbor mean Iroquois for Iroquois, Mohican for Mohican, Pale-face for pale face. No need tell chief any thing else."

"You forget, Hist, these are the words of the Great Spirit, and the chiefs must obey them as well as others. Here is another commandment—"Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

"What that mean?" demanded Hist, with the quickness of lightning.

Hetty explained that it was an order not to resent injuries, but rather to submit to receive fresh wrongs from the offender.

"And hear this, too, Hist," she added. "'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.'"

By this time Hetty had become excited; her eye gleamed with the earnestness of her feelings, her cheeks flushed, and her voice, usually so low and modulated, became stronger and more impressive. With the Bible she had been early made familiar by her mother, and she now turned from passage to passage with surprising rapidity, taking care to cull such verses as taught the sublime lessons of Christian charity and Christian forgiveness. To translate half she said, in her pious earnestness, Wah-ta-Wah would have found impracticable, had she made the effort, but wonder held her tongue tied, equally with the chiefs, and the young, simple-minded enthusiast had fairly become exhausted with her own efforts, before the other opened her mouth, again, to utter a syllable. Then, indeed, the Delaware girl gave a brief translation of the substance of what had been both read and said, confining herself to one or two of the more striking of the verses, those that had struck her own imagination as the most paradoxical, and which certainly would have been the most applicable to the case, could the uninstructed minds of the listeners embrace the great moral truths they conveyed.

It will be scarcely necessary to tell the reader the effect that such novel duties would be likely to produce among a group of Indian warriors, with whom it was a species of religious principle never to forget a benefit, or to forgive an injury. Fortunately, the previous explanations of Hist had prepared the minds of the Hurons for something extravagant, and most of that which to them seemed inconsistent and paradoxical, was accounted for by the fact that the speaker possessed a mind that was constituted differently from those of most of the human race. Still there were one or two old men who had heard similar doctrines from the missionaries, and these felt a desire to occupy an idle moment by pursuing a subject that they found so curious.

"This is the Good Book of the pale-faces," observed one of these chiefs, taking the volume from the unresisting hands of Hetty, who gazed anxiously at his face while he turned the leaves, as if she expected to witness some visible results from the circumstance. "This is the law by which my white brethren professes to live?"

Hist, to whom this question was addressed, if it might be considered as addressed to any one, in particular, answered simply in the affirmative; adding that both the French of the Canadas, and the Yengeese of the British provinces equally

admitted its authority, and affected to revere its principles.

"Tell my young sister," said the Huron, looking directly at Hist, "that I will open my mouth and say a few words."

"The Iroquois chief go to speak — my pale-face friend listen," said Hist.

"I rejoice to hear it!" exclaimed Hetty. "God has touched his heart, and he will now let father and Hurry go."

"This is the pale-face law," resumed the chief. "It tells him to do good to them that hurt him, and when his brother asks him for his rifle to give him the powder horn, too. Such is the pale-face law?"

"Not so — not so —" answered Hetty earnestly, when these words had been interpreted — "There is not a word about rifles in the whole book, and powder and bullets give offence to the Great Spirit."

"Why then does the pale-face use them? If he is ordered to give double to him that asks only for one thing, why does he take double from the poor Indian who ask for no thing. He comes from beyond the rising sun, with this book in his hand, and he teaches the red man to read it, but why does he forget himself all it says? When the Indian gives, he is never satisfied; and now he offers gold for the scalps of our women and children, though he calls us beasts if we take the scalp of a warrior killed in open war. My name is Rivenoak."

When Hetty had got this formidable question fairly presented to her mind in the translation, and Hist did her duty with more than usual readiness on this occasion, it scarcely need be said that she was sorely perplexed. Abler heads than that of this poor girl have frequently been puzzled by questions of a similar drift, and it is not surprising that with all her own earnestness and sincerity she did not know what answer to make.

"What shall I tell them, Hist," she asked imploringly — "I know that all I have read from the book is true, and yet it wouldn't seem so, would it, by the conduct of those to whom the book was given?"

"Give 'em pale-face reason," returned Hist, ironically — "that always good for one side; though he bad for t'other."

"No — no — Hist, there can't be two sides to truth — and yet it does seem strange! I'm certain I have read the verses right, and no one would be so wicked as to print the word of God wrong. That can never be, Hist."

"Well, to poor Injin girl, it seem every thing can be to pale-faces," returned the other, coolly. "One time 'ey say white, and one time 'ey say black. Why never can be?"

Hetty was more and more embarrassed, until overcome with the apprehension that she had failed in her object, and that the lives of her father and Hurry would be the forfeit of some blunder of her own, she burst into tears. From that moment the manner of Hist lost all its irony and cool indifference, and she became the fond caressing friend again. Throwing her arms around the afflicted girl, she attempted to soothe her sorrows by the scarcely ever failing remedy of female sympathy.

"Stop cry — no cry —" she said, wiping the tears from the face of Hetty, as she would have performed the same office for a child, and stopping to press her occasionally to her own warm bosom with the affection of a sister. "Why you so trouble? You no make he book, if he be wrong, and you no make he pale-face if he wicked. There wicked red man, and wicked white man — no colour all good — no colour all wicked. Chiefs know that well enough."

Hetty soon recovered from this sudden burst of grief, and then her mind reverted to the purpose of her visit, with all its single-hearted earnestness. Perceiving that the grim looking chiefs were still standing around her in grave attention, she hoped that another effort to convince them of the right might be successful. "Listen, Hist," she said, struggling to suppress her sobs, and to speak distinctly — "Tell the chiefs that it matters not what the wicked do — right is right — The words of The Great Spirit are the words of The Great Spirit — and no one can go harmless for doing an evil act, because another has done it before him. 'Render good for evil,' says this book, and that is the law for the red man as well as for the white man."

"Never hear such law among Delaware, or among Iroquois —" answered Hist soothingly. "No good to tell chiefs any such laws as dat. Tell 'em somet'ing they believe."

Hist was about to proceed, notwithstanding, when a tap on the shoulder from the finger of the oldest chief caused her to look up. She then perceived that one of the warriors had left the group, and was already returning to it with Hutter and Hurry. Understanding that the two last were to become parties in the inquiry, she became mute, with the unhesitating obedience of an Indian woman. In a few seconds the prisoners stood face to face with the principal men of the captors.

"Daughter," said the senior chief to the young Delaware, "ask this grey beard why he came into our camp?"

The question was put by Hist, in her own imperfect English, but in a way that was easy to be understood. Hutter was

too stern and obdurate by nature to shrink from the consequences of any of his acts, and he was also too familiar with the opinions of the savages not to understand that nothing was to be gained by equivocation or an unmanly dread of their anger. Without hesitating, therefore, he avowed the purpose with which he had landed, merely justifying it by the fact that the government of the province had bid high for scalps. This frank avowal was received by the Iroquois with evident satisfaction, not so much, however, on account of the advantage it gave them in a moral point of view, as by its proving that they had captured a man worthy of occupying their thoughts and of becoming a subject of their revenge. Hurry, when interrogated, confessed the truth, though he would have been more disposed to concealment than his sterner companion, did the circumstances very well admit of its adoption. But he had tact enough to discover that equivocation would be useless, at that moment, and he made a merit of necessity by imitating a frankness, which, in the case of Hutter, was the offspring of habits of indifference acting on a disposition that was always ruthless, and reckless of personal consequences.

As soon as the chiefs had received the answers to their questions, they walked away in silence, like men who deemed the matter disposed of, all Hetty's dogmas being thrown away on beings trained in violence from infancy to manhood. Hetty and Hist were now left alone with Hutter and Hurry, no visible restraint being placed on the movements of either; though all four, in fact, were vigilantly and unceasingly watched. As respects the men, care was had to prevent them from getting possession of any of the rifles that lay scattered about, their own included; and there all open manifestations of watchfulness ceased. But they, who were so experienced in Indian practices, knew too well how great was the distance between appearances and reality, to become the dupes of this seeming carelessness. Although both thought incessantly of the means of escape, and this without concert, each was aware of the uselessness of attempting any project of the sort that was not deeply laid, and promptly executed. They had been long enough in the encampment, and were sufficiently observant to have ascertained that Hist, also, was a sort of captive, and, presuming on the circumstance, Hutter spoke in her presence more openly than he might otherwise have thought it prudent to do; inducing Hurry to be equally unguarded by his example.

"I'll not blame you, Hetty, for coming on this errand, which was well meant if not very wisely planned," commenced the father, seating himself by the side of his daughter and taking her hand; a sign of affection that this rude being was accustomed to manifest to this particular child. "But preaching, and the Bible, are not the means to turn an Indian from his ways. Has Deerslayer sent any message; or has he any scheme by which he thinks to get us free?"

"Ay, that's the substance of it!" put in Hurry. "If you can help us, gal, to half a mile of freedom, or even a good start of a short quarter, I'll answer for the rest. Perhaps the old man may want a little more, but for one of my height and years that will meet all objections."

Hetty looked distressed, turning her eyes from one to the other, but she had no answer to give to the question of the reckless Hurry.

"Father," she said, "neither Deerslayer nor Judith knew of my coming until I had left the Ark. They are afraid the Iroquois will make a raft and try to get off to the hut, and think more of defending that than of coming to aid you."

"No — no — no —" said Hist hurriedly, though in a low voice, and with her face bent towards the earth, in order to conceal from those whom she knew to be watching them the fact of her speaking at all. "No — no — no — Deerslayer different man. He no t'ink of defending 'self, with friend in danger. Help one another, and all get to hut."

"This sounds well, old Tom," said Hurry, winking and laughing, though he too used the precaution to speak low — "Give me a ready witted squaw for a fri'nd, and though I'll not downright defy an Iroquois, I think I would defy the devil."

"No talk loud," said Hist. "Some Iroquois got Yengeese tongue, and all got Yengeese ear."

"Have we a friend in you, young woman?" enquired Hutter with an increasing interest in the conference. "If so, you may calculate on a solid reward, and nothing will be easier than to send you to your own tribe, if we can once fairly get you off with us to the castle. Give us the Ark and the canoes, and we can command the lake, spite of all the savages in the Canadas. Nothing but artillery could drive us out of the castle, if we can get back to it."

"S'pose 'ey come ashore to take scalp?" retorted Hist, with cool irony, at which the girl appeared to be more expert than is common for her sex.

"Ay — ay — that was a mistake; but there is little use in lamentations, and less still, young woman, in flings."

"Father," said Hetty, "Judith thinks of breaking open the big chest, in hopes of finding something in that which may buy your freedom of the savages."

A dark look came over Hutter at the announcement of this fact, and he muttered his dissatisfaction in a way to render it intelligible enough.

“What for no break open chest?” put in Hist. “Life sweeter than old chest — scalp sweeter than old chest. If no tell darter to break him open, Wah-ta-Wah no help him to run away.”

“Ye know not what ye ask — ye are but silly girls, and the wisest way for ye both is to speak of what ye understand and to speak of nothing else. I little like this cold neglect of the savages, Hurry; it’s a proof that they think of something serious, and if we are to do any thing, we must do it soon. Can we count on this young woman, think you?”

“Listen —” said Hist quickly, and with an earnestness that proved how much her feelings were concerned — “Wah-ta-Wah no Iroquois — All over Delaware — got Delaware heart — Delaware feeling. She prisoner, too. One prisoner help t’udder prisoner. No good to talk more, now. Darter stay with fader — Wah-ta-Wah come and see friend — all look right — Then tell what he do.”

This was said in a low voice, but distinctly, and in a manner to make an impression. As soon as it was uttered the girl arose and left the group, walking composedly towards the hut she occupied, as if she had no further interest in what might pass between the pale-faces.



## CHAPTER 12

*"She speaks much of her father; says she hears,  
There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her breast;  
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,  
That carry but half sense; her speech is nothing,  
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move  
The hearers to collection;"*

—HAMLET, IV.v.4–9.

**W**e left the occupants of the castle and the ark, buried in sleep. Once, or twice, in the course of the night, it is true, Deerslayer or the Delaware, arose and looked out upon the tranquil lake; when, finding all safe, each returned to his pallet, and slept like a man who was not easily deprived of his natural rest. At the first signs of the dawn the former arose, however, and made his personal arrangements for the day; though his companion, whose nights had not been tranquil or without disturbances of late, continued on his blanket until the sun had fairly risen; Judith, too, was later than common that morning, for the earlier hours of the night had brought her little of either refreshment or sleep. But ere the sun had shown himself over the eastern hills these too were up and afoot, even the tardy in that region seldom remaining on their pallets after the appearance of the great luminary. Chingachgook was in the act of arranging his forest toilet, when Deerslayer entered the cabin of the Ark and threw him a few coarse but light summer vestments that belonged to Hutter.

"Judith hath given me them for your use, chief," said the latter, as he cast the jacket and trousers at the feet of the Indian, "for it's ag'in all prudence and caution to be seen in your war dress and paint. Wash off all them fiery streaks from your cheeks, put on these garments, and here is a hat, such as it is, that will give you an awful uncivilized sort of civilization, as the missionaries call it. Remember that Hist is at hand, and what we do for the maiden must be done while we are doing for others. I know it's ag'in your gifts and your natur' to wear clothes, unless they are cut and carried in a red man's fashion, but make a virtue of necessity and put these on at once, even if they do rise a little in your throat."

Chingachgook, or the Serpent, eyed the vestments with strong disgust; but he saw the usefulness of the disguise, if not its absolute necessity. Should the Iroquois discover a red man, in or about the Castle, it might, indeed, place them more on their guard, and give their suspicions a direction towards their female captive. Any thing was better than a failure, as it regarded his betrothed, and, after turning the different garments round and round, examining them with a species of grave irony, affecting to draw them on in a way that defeated itself, and otherwise manifesting the reluctance of a young savage to confine his limbs in the usual appliances of civilized life, the chief submitted to the directions of his companion, and finally stood forth, so far as the eye could detect, a red man in colour alone. Little was to be apprehended from this last peculiarity, however, the distance from the shore, and the want of glasses preventing any very close scrutiny, and Deerslayer, himself, though of a brighter and fresher tint, had a countenance that was burnt by the sun to a hue scarcely less red than that of his Mohican companion. The awkwardness of the Delaware in his new attire caused his friend to smile more than once that day, but he carefully abstained from the use of any of those jokes which would have been bandied among white men on such an occasion, the habits of a chief, the dignity of a warrior on his first path, and the gravity of the circumstances in which they were placed uniting to render so much levity out of season.

The meeting at the morning meal of the three islanders, if we may use the term, was silent, grave and thoughtful. Judith showed by her looks that she had passed an unquiet night, while the two men had the future before them, with its unseen and unknown events. A few words of courtesy passed between Deerslayer and the girl, in the course of the breakfast, but no allusion was made to their situation. At length Judith, whose heart was full, and whose novel feelings disposed her to entertain sentiments more gentle and tender than common, introduced the subject, and this in a way to show how much of her thoughts it had occupied, in the course of the last sleepless night.

"It would be dreadful, Deerslayer," the girl abruptly exclaimed, "should anything serious befall my father and Hetty! We cannot remain quietly here and leave them in the hands of the Iroquois, without bethinking us of some means of serving them."

"I'm ready, Judith, to sarve them, and all others who are in trouble, could the way to do it be p'inted out. It's no trifling matter to fall into red-skin hands, when men set out on an ar'n'd like that which took Hutter and Hurry ashore; that I know as well as another, and I wouldn't wish my worst inimy in such a strait, much less them with whom I've journeyed, and eat,

and slept. Have you any scheme, that you would like to have the Sarpent and me indivour to carry out?"

"I know of no other means to release the prisoners, than by bribing the Iroquois. They are not proof against presents, and we might offer enough, perhaps, to make them think it better to carry away what to them will be rich gifts, than to carry away poor prisoners; if, indeed, they should carry them away at all!"

"This is well enough, Judith; yes, it's well enough, if the inimy is to be bought, and we can find articles to make the purchase with. Your father has a convenient lodge, and it is most cunningly placed, though it doesn't seem overstock'd with riches that will be likely to buy his ransom. There's the piece he calls Killdeer, might count for something, and I understand there's a keg of powder about, which might be a make-weight, sartain; and yet two able bodied men are not to be bought off for a trifle — besides —"

"Besides what?" demanded Judith impatiently, observing that the other hesitated to proceed, probably from a reluctance to distress her.

"Why, Judith, the Frenchers offer bounties as well as our own side, and the price of two scalps would purchase a keg of powder, and a rifle; though I'll not say one of the latter altogether as good as Killdeer, there, which your father va'nts as uncommon, and unequalled, like. But fair powder, and a pretty sartain rifle; then the red men are not the expartest in fire arms, and don't always know the difference atwixt that which is ra'al, and that which is seeming."

"This is horrible!" muttered the girl, struck by the homely manner in which her companion was accustomed to state his facts. "But you overlook my own clothes, Deerslayer, and they, I think, might go far with the women of the Iroquois."

"No doubt they would; no doubt they would, Judith," returned the other, looking at her keenly, as if he would ascertain whether she were really capable of making such a sacrifice. "But, are you sartain, gal, you could find it in your heart to part with your own finery for such a purpose? Many is the man who has thought he was valiant till danger stared him in the face; I've known them, too, that consaited they were kind and ready to give away all they had to the poor, when they've been listening to other people's hard heartedness; but whose fists have clenched as tight as the riven hickory when it came to downright offerings of their own. Besides, Judith, you're handsome — uncommon in that way, one might observe and do no harm to the truth — and they that have beauty, like to have that which will adorn it. Are you sartain you could find it in your heart to part with your own finery?"

The soothing allusion to the personal charms of the girl was well timed, to counteract the effect produced by the distrust that the young man expressed of Judith's devotion to her filial duties. Had another said as much as Deerslayer, the compliment would most probably have been overlooked in the indignation awakened by the doubts, but even the unpolished sincerity, that so often made this simple minded hunter bare his thoughts, had a charm for the girl; and while she colored, and for an instant her eyes flashed fire, she could not find it in her heart to be really angry with one whose very soul seemed truth and manly kindness. Look her reproaches she did, but conquering the desire to retort, she succeeded in answering in a mild and friendly manner.

"You must keep all your favorable opinions for the Delaware girls, Deerslayer, if you seriously think thus of those of your own colour," she said, affecting to laugh. "But try me; if you find that I regret either ribbon or feather, silk or muslin, then may you think what you please of my heart, and say what you think."

"That's justice! The rarest thing to find on 'arth is a truly just man. So says Tamenund, the wisest prophet of the Delawares, and so all must think that have occasion to see, and talk, and act among Mankind. I love a just man, Sarpent. His eyes are never covered with darkness towards his inimyies, while they are all sunshine and brightness towards his fri'nds. He uses the reason that God has given him, and he uses it with a feelin' of his being ordered to look at, and to consider things as they are, and not as he wants them to be. It's easy enough to find men who call themselves just, but it's wonderful oncommon to find them that are the very thing, in fact. How often have I seen Indians, gal, who believed they were lookin' into a matter agreeable to the will of the Great Spirit, when in truth they were only striving to act up to their own will and pleasure, and this, half the time, with a temptation to go wrong that could no more be seen by themselves, than the stream that runs in the next valley can be seen by us through yonder mountain', though any looker on might have discovered it as plainly as we can discover the parch that are swimming around this hut."

"Very true, Deerslayer," rejoined Judith, losing every trace of displeasure in a bright smile — "very true, and I hope to see you act on this love of justice in all matters in which I am concerned. Above all, I hope you will judge for yourself, and not believe every evil story that a prating idler like Hurry Harry may have to tell, that goes to touch the good name of any

young woman, who may not happen to have the same opinion of his face and person that the blustering gallant has of himself."

"Hurry Harry's idees do not pass for gospel with me, Judith; but even worse than he may have eyes and ears", returned the other gravely.

"Enough of this!" exclaimed Judith, with flashing eye and a flush that mounted to her temples, "and more of my father and his ransom. 'Tis as you say, Deerslayer; the Indians will not be likely to give up their prisoners without a heavier bribe than my clothes can offer, and father's rifle and powder. There is the chest."

"Ay, there is the chest as you say, Judith, and when the question gets to be between a secret and a scalp, I should think most men would prefer keeping the last. Did your father ever give you any downright commands consarning that chist?"

"Never. He has always appeared to think its locks, and its steel bands, and its strength, its best protection."

"'Tis a rare chest, and altogether of curious build," returned Deerslayer, rising and approaching the thing in question, on which he seated himself, with a view to examine it with greater ease. "Chingachgook, this is no wood that comes of any forest that you or I have ever trailed through! 'Tisn't the black walnut, and yet it's quite as comely, if not more so, did the smoke and the treatment give it fair play."

The Delaware drew near, felt of the wood, examined its grain, endeavored to indent the surface with a nail, and passed his hand curiously over the steel bands, the heavy padlocks, and the other novel peculiarities of the massive box.

"No — nothing like this grows in these regions," resumed Deerslayer. "I've seen all the oaks, both the maples, the elms, the bass woods, all the walnuts, the butternuts, and every tree that has a substance and colour, wrought into some form or other, but never have I before seen such a wood as this! Judith, the chest itself would buy your father's freedom, or Iroquois cur'osity isn't as strong as red-skin cur'osity, in general; especially in the matter of woods."

"The purchase might be cheaper made, perhaps, Deerslayer. The chest is full, and it would be better to part with half than to part with the whole. Besides, father — I know not why — but father values that chest highly."

"He would seem to prize what it holds more than the chest, itself, judging by the manner in which he treats the outside, and secures the inside. Here are three locks, Judith; is there no key?"

"I've never seen one, and yet key there must be, since Hetty told us she had often seen the chest opened."

"Keys no more lie in the air, or float on the water, than humans, gal; if there is a key, there must be a place in which it is kept."

"That is true, and it might not be difficult to find it, did we dare to search!"

"This is for you, Judith; it is altogether for you. The chist is your'n, or your father's; and Hutter is your father, not mine. Cur'osity is a woman's, and not a man's failing, and there you have got all the reasons before you. If the chist has articles for ransom, it seems to me they would be wisely used in redeeming their owner's life, or even in saving his scalp; but that is a matter for your judgment, and not for ourn. When the lawful owner of a trap, or a buck, or a canoe, isn't present, his next of kin becomes his ripsentyve by all the laws of the woods. We therefore leave you to say whether the chist shall, or shall not be opened."

"I hope you do not believe I can hesitate, when my father's life's in danger, Deerslayer!"

"Why, it's pretty much putting a scolding ag'in tears and mourning. It's not onreasonable to foretell that old Tom may find fault with what you've done, when he sees himself once more in his hut, here, but there's nothing unusual in men's falling out with what has been done for their own good; I dare to say that even the moon would seem a different thing from what it now does, could we look at it from the other side."

"Deerslayer, if we can find the key, I will authorize you to open the chest, and to take such things from it as you may think will buy father's ransom."

"First find the key, gal; we'll talk of the rest a'terwards. Sarpent, you've eyes like a fly, and a judgment that's seldom out. Can you help us in calculating where Floating Tom would be apt to keep the key of a chist that he holds to be as private as this?"

The Delaware had taken no part in the discourse until he was thus directly appealed to, when he quitted the chest, which had continued to attract his attention, and cast about him for the place in which a key would be likely to be concealed under such circumstances. As Judith and Deerslayer were not idle the while, the whole three were soon engaged

in an anxious and spirited search. As it was certain that the desired key was not to be found in any of the common drawers or closets, of which there were several in the building, none looked there, but all turned their inquiries to those places that struck them as ingenious hiding places, and more likely to be used for such a purpose. In this manner the outer room was thoroughly but fruitlessly examined, when they entered the sleeping apartment of Hutter. This part of the rude building was better furnished than the rest of the structure, containing several articles that had been especially devoted to the service of the deceased wife of its owner, but as Judith had all the rest of the keys, it was soon rummaged without bringing to light the particular key desired.

They now entered the bed room of the daughters. Chingachgook was immediately struck with the contrast between the articles and the arrangement of that side of the room that might be called Judith's, and that which more properly belonged to Hetty. A slight exclamation escaped him, and pointing in each direction he alluded to the fact in a low voice, speaking to his friend in the Delaware tongue.

"'Tis as you think, Sarpent," answered Deerslayer, whose remarks we always translate into English, preserving as much as possible of the peculiar phraseology and manner of the man, "'Tis just so, as any one may see, and 'tis all founded in natur'. One sister loves finery, some say overmuch; while t'other is as meek and lowly as God ever created goodness and truth. Yet, after all, I dare say that Judith has her vartues, and Hetty has her failin's."

"And the 'Feeble-Mind' has seen the chist opened?" inquired Chingachgook, with curiosity in his glance.

"Sartain; that much I've heard from her own lips; and, for that matter, so have you. It seems her father doesn't misgive her discretion, though he does that of his eldest darter."

"Then the key is hid only from the Wild Rose?" for so Chingachgook had begun gallantly to term Judith, in his private discourse with his friend.

"That's it! That's just it! One he trusts, and the other he doesn't. There's red and white in that, Sarpent, all tribes and nations agreeing in trusting some, and refusing to trust other some. It depends on character and judgment."

"Where could a key be put, so little likely to be found by the Wild Rose, as among coarse clothes?"

Deerslayer started, and turning to his friend with admiration expressed in every lineament of his face, he fairly laughed, in his silent but hearty manner, at the ingenuity and readiness of the conjecture.

"Your name's well bestowed, Sarpent — yes, 'tis well bestowed! Sure enough, where would a lover of finery be so little likely to s'arch, as among garments as coarse and onseemly as these of poor Hetty's. I dares to say, Judith's delicate fingers haven't touched a bit of cloth as rough and oncomely as that petticoat, now, since she first made acquaintance with the officers! Yet, who knows? The key may be as likely to be on the same peg, as in any other place. Take down the garment, Delaware, and let us see if you are ra'ally a prophet." Chingachgook did as desired, but no key was found. A coarse pocket, apparently empty, hung on the adjoining peg, and this was next examined. By this time, the attention of Judith was called in that direction, and she spoke hurriedly and like one who wished to save unnecessary trouble.

"Those are only the clothes of poor Hetty, dear simple girl!" she said, "Nothing we seek would be likely to be there."

The words were hardly out of the handsome mouth of the speaker, when Chingachgook drew the desired key from the pocket. Judith was too quick of apprehension not to understand the reason a hiding place so simple and exposed had been used. The blood rushed to her face, as much with resentment, perhaps, as with shame, and she bit her lip, though she continued silent. Deerslayer and his friend now discovered the delicacy of men of native refinement, neither smiling or even by a glance betraying how completely he understood the motives and ingenuity of this clever artifice. The former, who had taken the key from the Indian, led the way into the adjoining room, and applying it to a lock ascertained that the right instrument had actually been found. There were three padlocks, each of which however was easily opened by this single key. Deerslayer removed them all, loosened the hasps, raised the lid a little to make certain it was loose, and then he drew back from the chest several feet, signing to his friend to follow.

"This is a family chist, Judith," he said, "and 'tis like to hold family secrets. The Sarpent and I will go into the Ark, and look to the canoes, and paddles, and oars, while you can examine it by yourself, and find out whether any thing that will be a make-weight in a ransom is, or is not, among the articles. When you've got through give us a call, and we'll all sit in council together touching the valie of the articles."

"Stop, Deerslayer," exclaimed the girl, as he was about to withdraw. "Not a single thing will I touch — I will not even raise the lid — unless you are present. Father and Hetty have seen fit to keep the inside of this chest a secret from me, and I



am much too proud to pry into their hidden treasures unless it were for their own good. But on no account will I open the chest alone. Stay with me, then; I want witnesses of what I do.”

“I rather think, Sarpent, that the gal is right! Confidence and reliance beget security, but suspicion is like to make us all wary. Judith has a right to ask us to be present, and should the chist hold any of Master Hutter’s secrets, they will fall into the keeping of two as close mouthed young men as are to be found. We will stay with you, Judith — but first let us take a look at the lake and the shore, for this chist will not be emptied in a minute.”

The two men now went out on the platform, and Deerslayer swept the shore with the glass, while the Indian gravely turned his eye on the water and the woods, in quest of any sign that might betray the machinations of their enemies. Nothing was visible, and assured of their temporary security, the three collected around the chest again, with the avowed object of opening it.

Judith had held this chest and its unknown contents in a species of reverence as long as she could remember. Neither her father nor her mother ever mentioned it in her presence, and there appeared to be a silent convention that in naming the different objects that occasionally stood near it, or even lay on its lid, care should be had to avoid any allusion to the chest itself. Habit had rendered this so easy, and so much a matter of course, that it was only quite recently the girl had begun even to muse on the singularity of the circumstance. But there had never been sufficient intimacy between Hutter and his eldest daughter to invite confidence. At times he was kind, but in general, with her more especially, he was stern and morose. Least of all had his authority been exercised in a way to embolden his child to venture on the liberty she was about to take, without many misgivings of the consequences, although the liberty proceeded from a desire to serve himself. Then Judith was not altogether free from a little superstition on the subject of this chest, which had stood a sort of tabooed relic before her eyes from childhood to the present hour. Nevertheless the time had come when it would seem that this mystery was to be explained, and that under circumstances, too, which left her very little choice in the matter.

Finding that both her companions were watching her movements, in grave silence, Judith placed a hand on the lid and endeavored to raise it. Her strength, however, was insufficient, and it appeared to the girl, who was fully aware that all the fastenings were removed, that she was resisted in an unhallowed attempt by some supernatural power.

“I cannot raise the lid, Deerslayer!” she said — “Had we not better give up the attempt, and find some other means of releasing the prisoners?”

“Not so — Judith; not so, gal. No means are as sartain and easy, as a good bribe,” answered the other. “As for the lid, ’tis held by nothing but its own weight, which is prodigious for so small a piece of wood, loaded with iron as it is.”

As Deerslayer spoke, he applied his own strength to the effort, and succeeded in raising the lid against the timbers of the house, where he took care to secure it by a sufficient prop. Judith fairly trembled as she cast her first glance at the interior, and she felt a temporary relief in discovering that a piece of canvas, that was carefully tucked in around the edges, effectually concealed all beneath it. The chest was apparently well stored, however, the canvas lying within an inch of the lid.

“Here’s a full cargo,” said Deerslayer, eyeing the arrangement, “and we had needs go to work leisurely and at our ease. Sarpent, bring some stools while I spread this blanket on the floor, and then we’ll begin work orderly and in comfort.”

The Delaware complied, Deerslayer civilly placed a stool for Judith, took one himself, and commenced the removal of the canvas covering. This was done deliberately, and in as cautious a manner as if it were believed that fabrics of a delicate construction lay hidden beneath. When the canvass was removed, the first articles that came in view were some of the habiliments of the male sex. They were of fine materials, and, according to the fashions of the age, were gay in colours and rich in ornaments. One coat in particular was of scarlet, and had button holes worked in gold thread. Still it was not military, but was part of the attire of a civilian of condition, at a period when social rank was rigidly respected in dress. Chingachgook could not refrain from an exclamation of pleasure, as soon as Deerslayer opened this coat and held it up to view, for, notwithstanding all his trained self-command, the splendor of the vestment was too much for the philosophy of an Indian. Deerslayer turned quickly, and he regarded his friend with momentary displeasure as this burst of weakness escaped him, and then he soliloquized, as was his practice whenever any strong feeling suddenly got the ascendancy.

“’Tis his gift! — yes, ’tis the gift of a red-skin to love finery, and he is not to be blamed. This is an extr’ornary garment, too, and extr’ornary things get up extr’ornary feelin’s. I think this will do, Judith, for the Indian heart is hardly to be found in all America that can withstand colours like these, and glitter like that. If this coat was ever made for your father, you’ve

come honestly by the taste for finery, you have.”

“That coat was never made for father,” answered the girl, quickly — “it is much too long, while father is short and square.”

“Cloth was plenty if it was, and glitter cheap,” answered Deerslayer, with his silent, joyous laugh. “Sarpent, this garment was made for a man of your size, and I should like to see it on your shoulders.”

Chingachgook, nothing loath, submitted to the trial, throwing aside the coarse and thread bare jacket of Hutter, to deck his person in a coat that was originally intended for a gentleman. The transformation was ludicrous, but as men are seldom struck with incongruities in their own appearance, any more than in their own conduct, the Delaware studied this change in a common glass, by which Hutter was in the habit of shaving, with grave interest. At that moment he thought of Hist, and we owe it to truth, to say, though it may militate a little against the stern character of a warrior to avow it, that he wished he could be seen by her in his present improved aspect.

“Off with it, Sarpent — off with it,” resumed the inflexible Deerslayer. “Such garments as little become you as they would become me. Your gifts are for paint, and hawk’s feathers, and blankets, and wampum, and mine are for doublets of skins, tough leggings, and sarviceable moccasins. I say moccasins, Judith, for though white, living as I do in the woods it’s necessary to take to some of the practyces of the woods, for comfort’s sake and cheapness.”

“I see no reason, Deerslayer, why one man may not wear a scarlet coat, as well as another,” returned the girl. “I wish I could see you in this handsome garment.”

“See me in a coat fit for a Lord! — Well, Judith, if you wait till that day, you’ll wait until you see me beyond reason and memory. No — no — gal, my gifts are my gifts, and I’ll live and die in ’em, though I never bring down another deer, or spear another salmon. What have I done that you should wish to see me in such a flaunting coat, Judith?”

“Because I think, Deerslayer, that the false-tongued and false-hearted young gallants of the garrisons, ought not alone to appear in fine feathers, but that truth and honesty have their claims to be honored and exalted.”

“And what exaltification” — the reader will have remarked that Deerslayer had not very critically studied his dictionary — “and what exaltification would it be to me, Judith, to be bedizened and bescarleted like a Mingo chief that has just got his presents up from Quebec? No — no — I’m well as I am; and if not, I can be no better. Lay the coat down on the blanket, Sarpent, and let us look farther into the chist.”

The tempting garment, one surely that was never intended for Hutter, was laid aside, and the examination proceeded. The male attire, all of which corresponded with the coat in quality, was soon exhausted, and then succeeded female. A beautiful dress of brocade, a little the worse from negligent treatment, followed, and this time open exclamations of delight escaped the lips of Judith. Much as the girl had been addicted to dress, and favorable as had been her opportunities of seeing some little pretension in that way among the wives of the different commandants, and other ladies of the forts, never before had she beheld a tissue, or tints, to equal those that were now so unexpectedly placed before her eyes. Her rapture was almost childish, nor would she allow the inquiry to proceed, until she had attired her person in a robe so unsuited to her habits and her abode. With this end, she withdrew into her own room, where with hands practised in such offices, she soon got rid of her own neat gown of linen, and stood forth in the gay tints of the brocade. The dress happened to fit the fine, full person of Judith, and certainly it had never adorned a being better qualified by natural gifts to do credit to its really rich hues and fine texture. When she returned, both Deerslayer and Chingachgook, who had passed the brief time of her absence in taking a second look at the male garments, arose in surprise, each permitting exclamations of wonder and pleasure to escape him, in a way so unequivocal as to add new lustre to the eyes of Judith, by flushing her cheeks with a glow of triumph. Affecting, however, not to notice the impression she had made, the girl seated herself with the stateliness of a queen, desiring that the chest might be looked into, further.

“I don’t know a better way to treat with the Mingos, gal,” cried Deerslayer, “than to send you ashore as you be, and to tell ’em that a queen has arrived among ’em! They’ll give up old Hutter, and Hurry, and Hetty, too, at such a spectacle!”

“I thought your tongue too honest to flatter, Deerslayer,” returned the girl, gratified at this admiration more than she would have cared to own. “One of the chief reasons of my respect for you, was your love for truth.”

“And ’tis truth, and solemn truth, Judith, and nothing else. Never did eyes of mine gaze on as glorious a lookin’ creatur’ as you be yourself, at this very moment! I’ve seen beauties in my time, too, both white and red; and them that was renowned and talk’d of, far and near; but never have I beheld one that could hold any comparison with what you are at this

blessed instant, Judith; never."

The glance of delight which the girl bestowed on the frank-speaking hunter in no degree lessened the effect of her charms, and as the humid eyes blended with it a look of sensibility, perhaps Judith never appeared more truly lovely, than at what the young man had called that "blessed instant." He shook his head, held it suspended a moment over the open chest, like one in doubt, and then proceeded with the examination.

Several of the minor articles of female dress came next, all of a quality to correspond with the gown. These were laid at Judith's feet, in silence, as if she had a natural claim to their possession. One or two, such as gloves, and lace, the girl caught up, and appended to her already rich attire in affected playfulness, but with the real design of decorating her person as far as circumstances would allow. When these two remarkable suits, male and female they might be termed, were removed, another canvas covering separated the remainder of the articles from the part of the chest which they had occupied. As soon as Deerslayer perceived this arrangement he paused, doubtful of the propriety of proceeding any further.

"Every man has his secrets, I suppose," he said, "and all men have a right to their enjoyment. We've got low enough in this chist in my judgment to answer our wants, and it seems to me we should do well by going no farther; and by letting Master Hutter have to himself, and his own feelin's, all that's beneath this cover.

"Do you mean, Deerslayer, to offer these clothes to the Iroquois as ransom?" demanded Judith, quickly.

"Sartain. What are we prying into another man's chist for, but to sarve its owner in the best way we can. This coat, alone, would be very apt to gain over the head chief of the riptyles, and if his wife or darter should happen to be out with him, that there gownd would soften the heart of any woman that is to be found atween Albany and Montreal. I do not see that we want a larger stock in trade than them two articles."

"To you it may seem so, Deerslayer," returned the disappointed girl, "but of what use could a dress like this be to any Indian woman? She could not wear it among the branches of the trees, the dirt and smoke of the wigwam would soon soil it, and how would a pair of red arms appear, thrust through these short, laced sleeves!"

"All very true, gal, and you might go on and say it is altogether out of time, and place and season, in this region at all. What is it to us how the finery is treated, so long as it answers our wishes? I do not see that your father can make any use of such clothes, and it's lucky he has things that are of no valie to himself, that will bear a high price with others. We can make no better trade for him, than to offer these duds for his liberty. We'll throw in the light frivol'ties, and get Hurry off in the bargain."

"Then you think, Deerslayer, that Thomas Hutter has no one in his family — no child — no daughter, to whom this dress may be thought becoming, and whom you could wish to see in it, once and awhile, even though it should be at long intervals, and only in playfulness?"

"I understand you, Judith — yes, I now understand your meaning, and I think I can say, your wishes. That you are as glorious in that dress as the sun when it rises or sets in a soft October day, I'm ready to allow, and that you greatly become it is a good deal more sartain than that it becomes you. There's gifts in clothes, as well as in other things. Now I do not think that a warrior on his first path ought to lay on the same awful paints as a chief that has had his virtue tried, and knows from exper'ence he will not disgrace his pretensions. So it is with all of us, red or white. You are Thomas Hutter's darter, and that gownd was made for the child of some governor, or a lady of high station, and it was intended to be worn among fine furniture, and in rich company. In my eyes, Judith, a modest maiden never looks more becoming than when becomingly clad, and nothing is suitable that is out of character. Besides, gal, if there's a creatur' in the colony that can afford to do without finery, and to trust to her own good looks and sweet countenance, it's yourself."

"I'll take off the rubbish this instant, Deerslayer," cried the girl, springing up to leave the room, "and never do I wish to see it on any human being, again."

"So it is with 'em, all, Sarpent," said the other, turning to his friend and laughing, as soon as the beauty had disappeared. "They like finery, but they like their natyve charms most of all. I'm glad the gal has consented to lay aside her furbelows, howsever, for it's ag'in reason for one of her class to wear em; and then she is handsome enough, as I call it, to go alone. Hist would show oncommon likely, too, in such a gownd, Delaware!"

"Wah-ta-Wah is a red-skin girl, Deerslayer," returned the Indian, "like the young of the pigeon, she is to be known by her own feathers. I should pass by without knowing her, were she dressed in such a skin. It's wisest always to be so clad that our friends need not ask us for our names. The 'Wild Rose' is very pleasant, but she is no sweeter for so many colours."

"That's it! — that's natur', and the true foundation for love and protection. When a man stoops to pick a wild strawberry, he does not expect to find a melon; and when he wishes to gather a melon, he's disapp'inted if it proves to be a squash; though squashes be often brighter to the eye than melons. That's it, and it means stick to your gifts, and your gifts will stick to you."

The two men had now a little discussion together, touching the propriety of penetrating any farther into the chest of Hutter, when Judith re-appeared, divested of her robes, and in her own simple linen frock again.

"Thank you, Judith," said Deerslayer, taking her kindly by the hand—"for I know it went a little ag'in the nat'ral cravings of woman, to lay aside so much finery, as it might be in a lump. But you're more pleasing to the eye as you stand, you be, than if you had a crown on your head, and jewels dangling from your hair. The question now is, whether to lift this covering to see what will be ra'lly the best bargain we can make for Master Hutter, for we must do as we think he would be willing to do, did he stand here in our places."

Judith looked very happy. Accustomed as she was to adulation, the homely homage of Deerslayer had given her more true satisfaction, than she had ever yet received from the tongue of man. It was not the terms in which this admiration had been expressed, for they were simple enough, that produced so strong an impression; nor yet their novelty, or their warmth of manner, nor any of those peculiarities that usually give value to praise; but the unflinching truth of the speaker, that carried his words so directly to the heart of the listener. This is one of the great advantages of plain dealing and frankness. The habitual and wily flatterer may succeed until his practices recoil on himself, and like other sweets his aliment cloy by its excess; but he who deals honestly, though he often necessarily offends, possesses a power of praising that no quality but sincerity can bestow, since his words go directly to the heart, finding their support in the understanding. Thus it was with Deerslayer and Judith. So soon and so deeply did this simple hunter impress those who knew him with a conviction of his unbending honesty, that all he uttered in commendation was as certain to please, as all he uttered in the way of rebuke was as certain to rankle and excite enmity, where his character had not awakened a respect and affection, that in another sense rendered it painful. In after life, when the career of this untutored being brought him in contact with officers of rank, and others entrusted with the care of the interests of the state, this same influence was exerted on a wider field, even generals listening to his commendations with a glow of pleasure, that it was not always in the power of their official superiors to awaken. Perhaps Judith was the first individual of his own colour who fairly submitted to this natural consequence of truth and fair-dealing on the part of Deerslayer. She had actually pined for his praise, and she had now received it, and that in the form which was most agreeable to her weaknesses and habits of thought. The result will appear in the course of the narrative.

"If we knew all that chest holds, Deerslayer," returned the girl, when she had a little recovered from the immediate effect produced by his commendations of her personal appearance, "we could better determine on the course we ought to take."

"That's not onreasonable, gal, though it's more a pale-face than a red-skin gift to be prying into other people's secrets."

"Curiosity is natural, and it is expected that all human beings should have human failings. Whenever I've been at the garrisons, I've found that most in and about them had a longing to learn their neighbor's secrets."

"Yes, and sometimes to fancy them, when they couldn't find 'em out! That's the difference atween an Indian gentleman and a white gentleman. The Sarpent, here, would turn his head aside if he found himself onknowingly lookin' into another chief's wigwam, whereas in the settlements while all pretend to be great people, most prove they've got betters, by the manner in which they talk of their consarns. I'll be bound, Judith, you wouldn't get the Sarpent, there, to confess there was another in the tribe so much greater than himself, as to become the subject of his idees, and to empl'y his tongue in conversations about his movements, and ways, and food, and all the other little matters that occupy a man when he's not empl'y'd in his greater duties. He who does this is but little better than a blackguard, in the grain, and them that encourages him is pretty much of the same kidney, let them wear coats as fine as they may, or of what dye they please."

"But this is not another man's wigwam; it belongs to my father, these are his things, and they are wanted in his service."

"That's true, gal; that's true, and it carries weight with it. Well, when all is before us we may, indeed, best judge which to offer for the ransom, and which to withhold."

Judith was not altogether as disinterested in her feelings as she affected to be. She remembered that the curiosity of

Hetty had been indulged in connection with this chest, while her own had been disregarded, and she was not sorry to possess an opportunity of being placed on a level with her less gifted sister in this one particular. It appearing to be admitted all round that the enquiry into the contents of the chest ought to be renewed, Deerslayer proceeded to remove the second covering of canvass.

The articles that lay uppermost, when the curtain was again raised on the secrets of the chest, were a pair of pistols, curiously inlaid with silver. Their value would have been considerable in one of the towns, though as weapons in the woods they were a species of arms seldom employed; never, indeed, unless it might be by some officer from Europe, who visited the colonies, as many were then wont to do, so much impressed with the superiority of the usages of London as to fancy they were not to be laid aside on the frontiers of America. What occurred on the discovery of these weapons will appear in the succeeding chapter.



## CHAPTER 13

*"An oaken, broken, elbow-chair;  
A caudle-cup without an ear;  
A battered, shattered ash bedstead;  
A box of deal without a lid;  
A pair of tongs, but out of joint;  
A back-sword poker, without point;  
A dish which might good meat afford once;  
An Ovid, and an old  
Concordance."*

—THOMAS SHERIDAN, "A TRUE AND FAITHFUL INVENTORY OF THE GOODS BELONGING TO DR. SWIFT," LL.1-6, 13-14.

No sooner did Deerslayer raise the pistols, than he turned to the Delaware and held them up for his admiration. "Child gun," said the Serpent, smiling, while he handled one of the instruments as if it had been a toy.

"Not it, Sarpent; not it — 'twas made for a man and would satisfy a giant, if rightly used. But stop; white men are remarkable for their carelessness in putting away fire arms, in chists and corners. Let me look if care has been given to these."

As Deerslayer spoke, he took the weapon from the hand of his friend and opened the pan. The last was filled with priming, caked like a bit of cinder, by time, moisture and compression. An application of the ramrod showed that both the pistols were charged, although Judith could testify that they had probably lain for years in the chest. It is not easy to portray the surprise of the Indian at this discovery, for he was in the practice of renewing his priming daily, and of looking to the contents of his piece at other short intervals.

"This is white neglect," said Deerslayer, shaking his head, "and scarce a season goes by that some one in the settlements doesn't suffer from it. It's extr'ordinary too, Judith — yes, it's downright extr'ordinary that the owner shall fire his piece at a deer, or some other game, or perhaps at an inimy, and twice out of three times he'll miss; but let him catch an accident with one of these forgotten charges, and he makes it sartain death to a child, or a brother, or a fri'nd! Well, we shall do a good turn to the owner if we fire these pistols for him, and as they're novelties to you and me, Sarpent, we'll try our hands at a mark. Freshen that priming, and I'll do the same with this, and then we'll see who is the best man with a pistol; as for the rifle, that's long been settled atween us."

Deerslayer laughed heartily at his own conceit, and, in a minute or two, they were both standing on the platform, selecting some object in the Ark for their target. Judith was led by curiosity to their side.

"Stand back, gal, stand a little back; these we'pons have been long loaded," said Deerslayer, "and some accident may happen in the discharge." "Then you shall not fire them! Give them both to the Delaware; or it would be better to unload them without firing."

"That's ag'in usage — and some people say, ag'in manhood; though I hold to no such silly doctrine. We must fire 'em, Judith; yes, we must fire 'em; though I foresee that neither will have any great reason to boast of his skill."

Judith, in the main, was a girl of great personal spirit, and her habits prevented her from feeling any of the terror that is apt to come over her sex at the report of fire arms. She had discharged many a rifle, and had even been known to kill a deer, under circumstances that were favorable to the effort. She submitted therefore, falling a little back by the side of Deerslayer, giving the Indian the front of the platform to himself. Chingachgook raised the weapon several times, endeavored to steady it by using both hands, changed his attitude from one that was awkward to another still more so, and finally drew the trigger with a sort of desperate indifference, without having, in reality, secured any aim at all. The consequence was, that instead of hitting the knot which had been selected for the mark, he missed the ark altogether; the bullet skipping along the water like a stone that was thrown by hand.

"Well done — Sarpent — well done —" cried Deerslayer laughing, with his noiseless glee, "you've hit the lake, and that's an expl'ite for some men! I know'd it, and as much as said it, here, to Judith; for your short we'pons don't belong to red-skin gifts. You've hit the lake, and that's better than only hitting the air! Now, stand back and let us see what white gifts can do with a white we'pon. A pistol isn't a rifle, but colour is colour."

The aim of Deerslayer was both quick and steady, and the report followed almost as soon as the weapon rose. Still the pistol hung fire, as it is termed, and fragments of it flew in a dozen directions, some falling on the roof of the castle, others

in the Ark, and one in the water. Judith screamed, and when the two men turned anxiously towards the girl she was as pale as death, trembling in every limb.

"She's wounded — yes, the poor gal's wounded, Sarpent, though one couldn't foresee it, standing where she did. We'll lead her in to a seat, and we must do the best for her that our knowledge and skill can afford."

Judith allowed herself to be supported to a seat, swallowed a mouthful of the water that the Delaware offered her in a gourd, and, after a violent fit of trembling that seemed ready to shake her fine frame to dissolution, she burst into tears.

"The pain must be borne, poor Judith — yes, it must be borne," said Deerslayer, soothingly, "though I am far from wishing you not to weep; for weeping often lightens galish feelin's. Where can she be hurt, Sarpent? I see no signs of blood, nor any rent of skin or garments?"

"I am uninjured, Deerslayer," stammered the girl through her tears. "It's fright — nothing more, I do assure you, and, God be praised! no one, I find, has been harmed by the accident."

"This is extr'ornary!" exclaimed the unsuspecting and simple minded hunter — "I thought, Judith, you'd been above settlement weaknesses, and that you was a gal not to be frightened by the sound of a bursting we'pon — No — I didn't think you so skeary! Hetty might well have been startled; but you've too much judgment and reason to be frightened when the danger's all over. They're pleasant to the eye, chief, and changeful, but very unsartain in their feelin's!"

Shame kept Judith silent. There had been no acting in her agitation, but all had fairly proceeded from sudden and uncontrollable alarm — an alarm that she found almost as inexplicable to herself, as it proved to be to her companions. Wiping away the traces of tears, however, she smiled again, and was soon able to join in the laugh at her own folly.

"And you, Deerslayer," she at length succeeded in saying — "are you, indeed, altogether unhurt? It seems almost miraculous that a pistol should have burst in your hand, and you escape without the loss of a limb, if not of life!"

"Such wonders ar'n't oncommon, at all, among worn out arms. The first rifle they gave me play'd the same trick, and yet I liv'd through it, though not as onharmless as I've got out of this affair. Thomas Hutter is master of one pistol less than he was this morning, but, as it happened in trying to sarve him, there's no ground of complaint. Now, draw near, and let us look farther into the inside of the chist."

Judith, by this time, had so far gotten the better of her agitation as to resume her seat, and the examination went on. The next article that offered was enveloped in cloth, and on opening it, it proved to be one of the mathematical instruments that were then in use among seamen, possessing the usual ornaments and fastenings in brass. Deerslayer and Chingachgook expressed their admiration and surprise at the appearance of the unknown instrument, which was bright and glittering, having apparently been well cared for.

"This goes beyond the surveyors, Judith!" Deerslayer exclaimed, after turning the instrument several times in his hands. "I've seen all their tools often, and wicked and heartless enough are they, for they never come into the forest but to lead the way to waste and destruction; but none of them have as designing a look as this! I fear me, after all, that Thomas Hutter has journeyed into the wilderness with no fair intentions towards its happiness. Did you ever see any of the cravings of a surveyor about your father, gal?"

"He is no surveyor, Deerslayer, nor does he know the use of that instrument, though he seems to own it. Do you suppose that Thomas Hutter ever wore that coat? It is as much too large for him, as this instrument is beyond his learning."

"That's it — that must be it, Sarpent, and the old fellow, by some onknown means, has fallen heir to another man's goods! They say he has been a mariner, and no doubt this chist, and all it holds — ha! What have we here? — This far out does the brass and black wood of the tool!"

Deerslayer had opened a small bag, from which he was taking, one by one, the pieces of a set of chessmen. They were of ivory, much larger than common, and exquisitely wrought. Each piece represented the character or thing after which it is named; the knights being mounted, the castles stood on elephants, and even the pawns possessed the heads and busts of men. The set was not complete, and a few fractures betrayed bad usage; but all that was left had been carefully put away and preserved. Even Judith expressed wonder, as these novel objects were placed before her eyes, and Chingachgook fairly forgot his Indian dignity in admiration and delight. The latter took up each piece, and examined it with never tiring satisfaction, pointing out to the girl the more ingenious and striking portions of the workmanship. But the elephants gave him the greatest pleasure. The "Hughs!" that he uttered, as he passed his fingers over their trunks, and ears, and tails, were

very distinct, nor did he fail to note the pawns, which were armed as archers. This exhibition lasted several minutes, during which time Judith and the Indian had all the rapture to themselves. Deerslayer sat silent, thoughtful, and even gloomy, though his eyes followed each movement of the two principal actors, noting every new peculiarity about the pieces as they were held up to view. Not an exclamation of pleasure, nor a word of condemnation passed his lips. At length his companions observed his silence, and then, for the first time since the chessmen had been discovered, did he speak.

“Judith,” he asked earnestly, but with a concern that amounted almost to tenderness of manner, “did your parents ever talk to you of religion?”

The girl coloured, and the flashes of crimson that passed over her beautiful countenance were like the wayward tints of a Neapolitan sky in November. Deerslayer had given her so strong a taste for truth, however, that she did not waver in her answer, replying simply and with sincerity.

“My mother did often,” she said, “my father never. I thought it made my mother sorrowful to speak of our prayers and duties, but my father has never opened his mouth on such matters, before or since her death.”

“That I can believe — that I can believe. He has no God — no such God as it becomes a man of white skin to worship, or even a red-skin. Them things are idols!”

Judith started, and for a moment she seemed seriously hurt. Then she reflected, and in the end she laughed. “And you think, Deerslayer, that these ivory toys are my father’s Gods? I have heard of idols, and know what they are.”

“Them are idols!” repeated the other, positively. “Why should your father keep ’em, if he doesn’t worship ’em.”

“Would he keep his gods in a bag, and locked up in a chest? No, no, Deerslayer; my poor father carries his God with him, wherever he goes, and that is in his own cravings. These things may really be idols — I think they are myself, from what I have heard and read of idolatry, but they have come from some distant country, and like all the other articles, have fallen into Thomas Hutter’s hands when he was a sailor.”

“I’m glad of it — I am downright glad to hear it, Judith, for I do not think I could have mustered the resolution to strive to help a white idolater out of his difficulties! The old man is of my colour and nation and I wish to sarve him, but as one who denied all his gifts, in the way of religion, it would have come hard to do so. That animal seems to give you great satisfaction, Sarpent, though it’s an idolatrous beast at the best.”

“It is an elephant,” interrupted Judith. “I’ve often seen pictures of such animals, at the garrisons, and mother had a book in which there was a printed account of the creature. Father burnt that with all the other books, for he said Mother loved reading too well. This was not long before mother died, and I’ve sometimes thought that the loss hastened her end.”

This was said equally without levity and without any very deep feeling. It was said without levity, for Judith was saddened by her recollections, and yet she had been too much accustomed to live for self, and for the indulgence of her own vanities, to feel her mother’s wrongs very keenly. It required extraordinary circumstances to awaken a proper sense of her situation, and to stimulate the better feelings of this beautiful, but misguided girl, and those circumstances had not yet occurred in her brief existence.

“Elephant, or no elephant, ’tis an idol,” returned the hunter, “and not fit to remain in Christian keeping.”

“Good for Iroquois!” said Chingachgook, parting with one of the castles with reluctance, as his friend took it from him to replace it in the bag — “Elephon buy whole tribe — buy Delaware, almost!”

“Ay, that it would, as any one who comprehends red-skin natur’ must know,” answered Deerslayer, “but the man that passes false money, Sarpent, is as bad as he who makes it. Did you ever know a just Injin that wouldn’t scorn to sell a ‘coon skin for the true marten, or to pass off a mink for a beaver. I know that a few of these idols, perhaps one of them elephants, would go far towards buying Thomas Hutter’s liberty, but it goes ag’in conscience to pass such counterfeit money. Perhaps no Injin tribe, hereaway, is downright idolators but there’s some that come so near it, that white gifts ought to be particular about encouraging them in their mistake.”

“If idolatry is a gift, Deerslayer, and gifts are what you seem to think them, idolatry in such people can hardly be a sin,” said Judith with more smartness than discrimination.

“God grants no such gifts to any of his creatur’s, Judith,” returned the hunter, seriously. “He must be adored, under some name or other, and not creatur’s of brass or ivory. It matters not whether the Father of All is called God, or Manitou, Deity or Great Spirit, he is none the less our common maker and master; nor does it count for much whether the souls of the just go to Paradise, or Happy Hunting Grounds, since He may send each his own way, as suits his own pleasure and



wisdom; but it curdles my blood, when I find human mortals so bound up in darkness and consait, as to fashion the 'arth, or wood, or bones, things made by their own hands, into motionless, senseless effigies, and then fall down afore them, and worship 'em as a Deity!"

"After all, Deerslayer, these pieces of ivory may not be idols, at all. I remember, now, to have seen one of the officers at the garrison with a set of fox and geese made in some such a design as these, and here is something hard, wrapped in cloth, that may belong to your idols."

Deerslayer took the bundle the girl gave him, and unrolling it, he found the board within. Like the pieces it was large, rich, and inlaid with ebony and ivory. Putting the whole in conjunction the hunter, though not without many misgivings, slowly came over to Judith's opinion, and finally admitted that the fancied idols must be merely the curiously carved men of some unknown game. Judith had the tact to use her victory with great moderation, nor did she once, even in the most indirect manner, allude to the ludicrous mistake of her companion.

This discovery of the uses of the extraordinary-looking little images settled the affair of the proposed ransom. It was agreed generally, and all understood the weaknesses and tastes of Indians, that nothing could be more likely to tempt the cupidity of the Iroquois than the elephants, in particular. Luckily the whole of the castles were among the pieces, and these four tower-bearing animals it was finally determined should be the ransom offered. The remainder of the men, and, indeed, all the rest of the articles in the chest, were to be kept out of view, and to be resorted to only as a last appeal. As soon as these preliminaries were settled, everything but those intended for the bribe was carefully replaced in the chest, all the covers were 'tucked in' as they had been found, and it was quite possible, could Hutter have been put in possession of the castle again, that he might have passed the remainder of his days in it without even suspecting the invasion that had been made on the privacy of the chest. The rent pistol would have been the most likely to reveal the secret, but this was placed by the side of its fellow, and all were pressed down as before, some half a dozen packages in the bottom of the chest not having been opened at all. When this was done the lid was lowered, the padlocks replaced, and the key turned. The latter was then replaced in the pocket from which it had been taken.

More than an hour was consumed in settling the course proper to be pursued, and in returning everything to its place. The pauses to converse were frequent, and Judith, who experienced a lively pleasure in the open, undisguised admiration with which Deerslayer's honest eyes gazed at her handsome face, found the means to prolong the interview, with a dexterity that seems to be innate in female coquetry. Deerslayer, indeed, appeared to be the first who was conscious of the time that had been thus wasted, and to call the attention of his companions to the necessity of doing something towards putting the plan of ransoming into execution. Chingachgook had remained in Hutter's bed room, where the elephants were laid, to feast his eyes with the images of animals so wonderful, and so novel. Perhaps an instinct told him that his presence would not be as acceptable to his companions as this holding himself aloof, for Judith had not much reserve in the manifestations of her preferences, and the Delaware had not got so far as one betrothed without acquiring some knowledge of the symptoms of the master passion.

"Well, Judith," said Deerslayer, rising, after the interview had lasted much longer than even he himself suspected, "'tis pleasant conversing with you, and settling all these matters, but duty calls us another way. All this time, Hurry and your father, not to say Hetty —" The word was cut short in the speaker's mouth, for, at that critical moment, a light step was heard on the platform, or 'court-yard', a human figure darkened the doorway, and the person last mentioned stood before him. The low exclamation that escaped Deerslayer and the slight scream of Judith were hardly uttered, when an Indian youth, between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, stood beside her. These two entrances had been made with moccasined feet, and consequently almost without noise, but, unexpected and stealthy as they were, they had not the effect to disturb Deerslayer's self possession. His first measure was to speak rapidly in Delaware to his friend, cautioning him to keep out of sight, while he stood on his guard; the second was to step to the door to ascertain the extent of the danger. No one else, however, had come, and a simple contrivance, in the shape of a raft, that lay floating at the side of the Ark, at once explained the means that had been used in bringing Hetty off. Two dead and dry, and consequently buoyant, logs of pine were bound together with pins and withes and a little platform of riven chestnut had been rudely placed on their surfaces. Here Hetty had been seated, on a billet of wood, while the young Iroquois had rowed the primitive and slow-moving, but perfectly safe craft from the shore.

As soon as Deerslayer had taken a close survey of this raft, and satisfied himself nothing else was near, he shook his head and muttered in his soliloquizing way — "This comes of prying into another man's chist! Had we been watchful, and

keen eyed, such a surprise could never have happened, and, getting this much from a boy teaches us what we may expect when the old warriors set themselves fairly about their sarcumventions. It opens the way, howsoever, to a treaty for the ransom, and I will hear what Hetty has to say."

Judith, as soon as her surprise and alarm had a little abated, discovered a proper share of affectionate joy at the return of her sister. She folded her to her bosom, and kissed her, as had been her wont in the days of their childhood and innocence. Hetty herself was less affected, for to her there was no surprise, and her nerves were sustained by the purity and holiness of her purpose. At her sister's request she took a seat, and entered into an account of her adventures since they had parted. Her tale commenced just as Deerslayer returned, and he also became an attentive listener, while the young Iroquois stood near the door, seemingly as indifferent to what was passing as one of its posts.

The narrative of the girl was sufficiently clear, until she reached the time where we left her in the camp, after the interview with the chiefs, and, at the moment when Hist quitted her, in the abrupt manner already related. The sequel of the story may be told in her own language.

"When I read the texts to the chiefs, Judith, you could not have seen that they made any changes on their minds," she said, "but if seed is planted, it will grow. God planted the seeds of all these trees —"

"Ay that did he — that did he —" muttered Deerslayer; "and a goodly harvest has followed."

"God planted the seeds of all these trees," continued Hetty, after a moment's pause, "and you see to what a height and shade they have grown! So it is with the Bible. You may read a verse this year, and forget it, and it will come back to you a year hence, when you least expect to remember it."

"And did you find any thing of this among the savages, poor Hetty?"

"Yes, Judith, and sooner and more fully than I had even hoped. I did not stay long with father and Hurry, but went to get my breakfast with Hist. As soon as we had done the chiefs came to us, and then we found the fruits of the seed that had been planted. They said what I had read from the good book was right — it must be right — it sounded right; like a sweet bird singing in their ears; and they told me to come back and say as much to the great warrior who had slain one of their braves; and to tell it to you, and to say how happy they should be to come to church here, in the castle, or to come out in the sun, and hear me read more of the sacred volume — and to tell you that they wish you would lend them some canoes that they can bring father and Hurry and their women to the castle, that we might all sit on the platform there and listen to the singing of the Pale-face Manitou. There, Judith; did you ever know of any thing that so plainly shows the power of the Bible, as that!"

"If it were true 't would be a miracle, indeed, Hetty. But all this is no more than Indian cunning and Indian treachery, striving to get the better of us by management, when they find it is not to be done by force."

"Do you doubt the Bible, sister, that you judge the savages so harshly!"

"I do not doubt the Bible, poor Hetty, but I much doubt an Indian and an Iroquois. What do you say to this visit, Deerslayer?"

"First let me talk a little with Hetty," returned the party appealed to; "Was the raft made a'ter you had got your breakfast, gal, and did you walk from the camp to the shore opposite to us, here?"

"Oh! no, Deerslayer. The raft was ready made and in the water—could that have been by a miracle, Judith?"

"Yes — yes — an Indian miracle," rejoined the hunter — "They're expart enough in them sort of miracles. And you found the raft ready made to your hands, and in the water, and in waiting like for its cargo?"

"It was all as you say. The raft was near the camp, and the Indians put me on it, and had ropes of bark, and they dragged me to the place opposite to the castle, and then they told that young man to row me off, here."

"And the woods are full of the vagabonds, waiting to know what is to be the upshot of the miracle. We comprehend this affair, now, Judith, but I'll first get rid of this young Canada blood sucker, and then we'll settle our own course. Do you and Hetty leave us together, first bringing me the elephants, which the Serpent is admiring, for 'twill never do to let this loping deer be alone a minute, or he'll borrow a canoe without asking."

Judith did as desired, first bringing the pieces, and retiring with her sister into their own room. Deerslayer had acquired some knowledge of most of the Indian dialects of that region, and he knew enough of the Iroquois to hold a dialogue in the language. Beckoning to the lad, therefore, he caused him to take a seat on the chest, when he placed two of

the castles suddenly before him. Up to that moment, this youthful savage had not expressed a single intelligible emotion, or fancy. There were many things, in and about the place, that were novelties to him, but he had maintained his self-command with philosophical composure. It is true, Deerslayer had detected his dark eye scanning the defences and the arms, but the scrutiny had been made with such an air of innocence, in such a gaping, indolent, boyish manner, that no one but a man who had himself been taught in a similar school, would have even suspected his object. The instant, however, the eyes of the savage fell upon the wrought ivory, and the images of the wonderful, unknown beasts, surprise and admiration got the mastery of him. The manner in which the natives of the South Sea Islands first beheld the toys of civilized life has been often described, but the reader is not to confound it with the manner of an American Indian, under similar circumstances. In this particular case, the young Iroquois or Huron permitted an exclamation of rapture to escape him, and then he checked himself like one who had been guilty of an indecorum. After this, his eyes ceased to wander, but became riveted on the elephants, one of which, after a short hesitation, he even presumed to handle. Deerslayer did not interrupt him for quite ten minutes, knowing that the lad was taking such note of the curiosities, as would enable him to give the most minute and accurate description of their appearance to his seniors, on his return. When he thought sufficient time had been allowed to produce the desired effect, the hunter laid a finger on the naked knee of the youth and drew his attention to himself.

"Listen," he said; "I want to talk with my young friend from the Canadas. Let him forget that wonder for a minute."

"Where t'other pale brother?" demanded the boy, looking up and letting the idea that had been most prominent in his mind, previously to the introduction of the chess men, escape him involuntarily.

"He sleeps, or if he isn't fairly asleep, he is in the room where the men do sleep," returned Deerslayer. "How did my young friend know there was another?"

"See him from the shore. Iroquois have got long eyes — see beyond the clouds — see the bottom of the Great Spring!"

"Well, the Iroquois are welcome. Two pale-faces are prisoners in the camp of your fathers, boy."

The lad nodded, treating the circumstance with great apparent indifference; though a moment after he laughed as if exulting in the superior address of his own tribe.

"Can you tell me, boy, what your chiefs intend to do with these captives, or haven't they yet made up their minds?"

The lad looked a moment at the hunter with a little surprise. Then he coolly put the end of his fore finger on his own head, just above the left ear, and passed it round his crown with an accuracy and readiness that showed how well he had been drilled in the peculiar art of his race.

"When?" demanded Deerslayer, whose gorge rose at this cool demonstration of indifference to human life. "And why not take them to your wigwams?"

"Road too long, and full of pale-faces. Wigwam full, and scalps sell high. Small scalp, much gold."

"Well that explains it — yes, that does explain it. There's no need of being any plainer. Now you know, lad, that the oldest of your prisoners is the father of these two young women, and the other is the suitor of one of them. The gals nat'rally wish to save the scalps of such fri'nds, and they will give them two ivory creatures, as ransom. One for each scalp. Go back and tell this to your chiefs, and bring me the answer before the sun sets."

The boy entered zealously into this project, and with a sincerity that left no doubt of his executing his commission with intelligence and promptitude. For a moment he forgot his love of honor, and all his clannish hostility to the British and their Indians, in his wish to have such a treasure in his tribe, and Deerslayer was satisfied with the impression he had made. It is true the lad proposed to carry one of the elephants with him, as a specimen of the other, but to this his brother negotiator was too sagacious to consent; well knowing that it might never reach its destination if confided to such hands. This little difficulty was soon arranged, and the boy prepared to depart. As he stood on the platform, ready to step aboard of the raft, he hesitated, and turned short with a proposal to borrow a canoe, as the means most likely to shorten the negotiations. Deerslayer quietly refused the request, and, after lingering a little longer, the boy rowed slowly away from the castle, taking the direction of a thicket on the shore that lay less than half a mile distant. Deerslayer seated himself on a stool and watched the progress of the ambassador, sometimes closely scanning the whole line of shore, as far as eye could reach, and then placing an elbow on a knee, he remained a long time with his chin resting on the hand.

During the interview between Deerslayer and the lad, a different scene took place in the adjoining room. Hetty had inquired for the Delaware, and being told why and where he remained concealed, she joined him. The reception which

Chingachgook gave his visitor was respectful and gentle. He understood her character, and, no doubt, his disposition to be kind to such a being was increased by the hope of learning some tidings of his betrothed. As soon as the girl entered she took a seat, and invited the Indian to place himself near her; then she continued silent, as if she thought it decorous for him to question her, before she consented to speak on the subject she had on her mind. But, as Chingachgook did not understand this feeling, he remained respectfully attentive to any thing she might be pleased to tell him.

"You are Chingachgook, the Great Serpent of the Delawares, ar'n't you?" the girl at length commenced, in her own simple way losing her self-command in the desire to proceed, but anxious first to make sure of the individual. "Chingachgook," returned the Delaware with grave dignity. "That say Great Serpent, in Deerslayer tongue."

"Well, that is my tongue. Deerslayer, and father, and Judith, and I, and poor Hurry Harry — do you know Henry March, Great Serpent? I know you don't, however, or he would have spoken of you, too."

"Did any tongue name Chingachgook, Drooping-Lily?" for so the chief had named poor Hetty. "Was his name sung by a little bird among Iroquois?"

Hetty did not answer at first, but, with that indescribable feeling that awakens sympathy and intelligence among the youthful and unpracticed of her sex, she hung her head, and the blood suffused her cheek ere she found her tongue. It would have exceeded her stock of intelligence to explain this embarrassment, but, though poor Hetty could not reason, on every emergency, she could always feel. The colour slowly receded from her cheeks, and the girl looked up archly at the Indian, smiling with the innocence of a child, mingled with the interest of a woman.

"My sister, the Drooping Lily, hear such bird!" Chingachgook added, and this with a gentleness of tone and manner that would have astonished those who sometimes heard the discordant cries that often came from the same throat; these transitions from the harsh and guttural, to the soft and melodious not being infrequent in ordinary Indian dialogues. "My sister's ears were open — has she lost her tongue?"

"You are Chingachgook — you must be; for there is no other red man here, and she thought Chingachgook would come."

"Chin-gach-gook," pronouncing the name slowly, and dwelling on each syllable "Great Serpent, Yengeese tongue."

[It is singular there should be any question concerning the origin of the well-known sobriquet of "Yankees." Nearly all the old writers who speak of the Indians first known to the colonists make them pronounce the word "English" as "Yengeese." Even at this day, it is a provincialism of New England to say "Anglish" instead of "Inglish," and there is a close conformity of sound between "Anglish" and "yengeese," more especially if the latter word, as was probably the case, be pronounced short. The transition from "Yengeese," thus pronounced, to "Yankees" is quite easy. If the former is pronounced "Yangis," it is almost identical with "Yankees," and Indian words have seldom been spelt as they are pronounced. Thus the scene of this tale is spelt "Otsego," and is properly pronounced "Otsago." The liquids of the Indians would easily convert "En" into "Yen."]

"Chin-gach-gook," repeated Hetty, in the same deliberate manner. "Yes, so Hist called it, and you must be the chief."

"Wah-ta-Wah," added the Delaware.

"Wah-ta-Wah, or Hist-oh-Hist. I think Hist prettier than Wah, and so I call her Hist."

"Wah very sweet in Delaware ears!"

"You make it sound differently from me. But, never mind, I did hear the bird you speak of sing, Great Serpent."

"Will my sister say words of song? What she sing most — how she look — often she laugh?"

"She sang Chin-gach-gook oftener than any thing else; and she laughed heartily, when I told how the Iroquois waded into the water after us, and couldn't catch us. I hope these logs haven't ears, Serpent!"

"No fear logs; fear sister next room. No fear Iroquois; Deerslayer stuff his eyes and ears with strange beast."

"I understand you, Serpent, and I understood Hist. Sometimes I think I'm not half as feeble minded as they say I am. Now, do you look up at the roof, and I'll tell you all. But you frighten me, you look so eager when I speak of Hist."

The Indian controlled his looks, and affected to comply with the simple request of the girl.

"Hist told me to say, in a very low voice, that you mustn't trust the Iroquois in anything. They are more artful than any Indians she knows. Then she says that there is a large bright star that comes over the hill, about an hour after dark" — Hist had pointed out the planet Jupiter, without knowing it — "and just as that star comes in sight, she will be on the point,

where I landed last night, and that you must come for her, in a canoe.”

“Good — Chingachgook understand well enough, now; but he understand better if my sister sing him ag’in.”

Hetty repeated her words, more fully explaining what star was meant, and mentioning the part of the point where he was to venture ashore. She now proceeded in her own unsophisticated way to relate her intercourse with the Indian maid, and to repeat several of her expressions and opinions that gave great delight to the heart of her betrothed. She particularly renewed her injunctions to be on their guard against treachery, a warning that was scarcely needed, however, as addressed to men as wary as those to whom it was sent. She also explained with sufficient clearness, for on all such subjects the mind of the girl seldom failed her, the present state of the enemy, and the movements they had made since morning. Hist had been on the raft with her until it quitted the shore, and was now somewhere in the woods, opposite to the castle, and did not intend to return to the camp until night approached; when she hoped to be able to slip away from her companions, as they followed the shore on their way home, and conceal herself on the point. No one appeared to suspect the presence of Chingachgook, though it was necessarily known that an Indian had entered the Ark the previous night, and it was suspected that he had since appeared in and about the castle in the dress of a pale-face. Still some little doubt existed on the latter point, for, as this was the season when white men might be expected to arrive, there was some fear that the garrison of the castle was increasing by these ordinary means. All this had Hist communicated to Hetty while the Indians were dragging them along shore, the distance, which exceeded six miles, affording abundance of time.

“Hist don’t know, herself, whether they suspect her or not, or whether they suspect you, but she hopes neither is the case. And now, Serpent, since I have told you so much from your betrothed,” continued Hetty, unconsciously taking one of the Indian’s hands, and playing with the fingers, as a child is often seen to play with those of a parent, “you must let me tell you something from myself. When you marry Hist, you must be kind to her, and smile on her, as you do now on me, and not look cross as some of the chiefs do at their squaws. Will you promise this?”

“Alway good to Wah! — too tender to twist hard; else she break.”

“Yes, and smile, too; you don’t know how much a girl craves smiles from them she loves. Father scarce smiled on me once, while I was with him — and, Hurry — Yes — Hurry talked loud and laughed, but I don’t think he smiled once either. You know the difference between a smile and a laugh?”

“Laugh, best. Hear Wah laugh, think bird sing!”

“I know that; her laugh is pleasant, but you must smile. And then, Serpent, you mustn’t make her carry burthens and hoe corn, as so many Indians do; but treat her more as the pale-faces treat their wives.”

“Wah-ta-Wah no pale-face — got red-skin; red heart, red feelin’s. All red; no pale-face. Must carry papoose.”

“Every woman is willing to carry her child,” said Hetty smiling, “and there is no harm in that. But you must love Hist, and be gentle, and good to her; for she is gentle and good herself.”

Chingachgook gravely bowed, and then he seemed to think this part of the subject might be dismissed. Before there was time for Hetty to resume her communications, the voice of Deerslayer was heard calling on his friend, in the outer room. At this summons the Serpent arose to obey, and Hetty joined her sister.



## CHAPTER 14

*"A stranger animal," cries one,  
'Sure never liv'd beneath the sun;  
A lizard's body lean and long,  
A fish's head, a serpent's tongue,  
Its foot, with triple claw disjoined;  
And what a length of tail behind!"*

—JAMES MERRICK, "THE CHAMELEON," 11.21–26.

The first act of the Delaware, on rejoining his friend, was to proceed gravely to disencumber himself of his civilized attire, and to stand forth an Indian warrior again. The protest of Deerslayer was met by his communicating the fact that the presence of an Indian in the hut was known to the Iroquois, and that maintaining the disguise would be more likely to direct suspicions to his real object, than if he came out openly as a member of a hostile tribe. When the latter understood the truth, and was told that he had been deceived in supposing the chief had succeeded in entering the Ark undiscovered, he cheerfully consented to the change, since further attempt at concealment was useless. A gentler feeling than the one avowed, however, lay at the bottom of the Indian's desire to appear as a son of the forest. He had been told that Hist was on the opposite shore, and nature so far triumphed over all distinctions of habit, and tribes and people, as to reduce this young savage warrior to the level of a feeling which would have been found in the most refined inhabitant of a town, under similar circumstances. There was a mild satisfaction in believing that she he loved could see him, and as he walked out on the platform in his scanty, native attire, an Apollo of the wilderness, a hundred of the tender fancies that fleet through lovers' brains beset his imagination and softened his heart. All this was lost on Deerslayer, who was no great adept in the mysteries of Cupid, but whose mind was far more occupied with the concerns that forced themselves on his attention, than with any of the truant fancies of love. He soon recalled his companion, therefore, to a sense of their actual condition, by summoning him to a sort of council of war, in which they were to settle their future course. In the dialogue that followed, the parties mutually made each other acquainted with what had passed in their several interviews. Chingachgook was told the history of the treaty about the ransom, and Deerslayer heard the whole of Hetty's communications. The latter listened with generous interest to his friend's hopes, and promised cheerfully all the assistance he could lend.

"Tis our main ar'n'd, Sarpent, as you know, this battling for the castle and old Hutter's darters, coming in as a sort of accident. Yes — yes — I'll be active in helping little Hist, who's not only one of the best and handsomest maidens of the tribe, but the very best and handsomest. I've always encouraged you, chief, in that liking, and it's proper, too, that a great and ancient race like your'n shouldn't come to an end. If a woman of red skin and red gifts could get to be near enough to me to wish her for a wife, I'd s'arch for just such another, but that can never be; no, that can never be. I'm glad Hetty has met with Hist, howsoever, for though the first is a little short of wit and understanding, the last has enough for both. Yes, Sarpent," laughing heartily — "put 'em together, and two smarter gals isn't to be found in all York Colony!"

"I will go to the Iroquois camp," returned the Delaware, gravely. "No one knows Chingachgook but Wah, and a treaty for lives and scalps should be made by a chief. Give me the strange beasts, and let me take a canoe."

Deerslayer dropped his head and played with the end of a fish-pole in the water, as he sat dangling his legs over the edge of the platform, like a man who was lost in thought by the sudden occurrence of a novel idea. Instead of directly answering the proposal of his friend, he began to soliloquize, a circumstance however that in no manner rendered his words more true, as he was remarkable for saying what he thought, whether the remarks were addressed to himself, or to any one else.

"Yes — yes —" he said — "this must be what they call love! I've heard say that it sometimes upsets reason altogether, leaving a young man as helpless, as to calculation and caution, as a brute beast. To think that the Sarpent should be so lost to reason, and cunning, and wisdom! We must sartainly manage to get Hist off, and have 'em married as soon as we get back to the tribe, or this war will be of no more use to the chief, than a hunt a little uncommon extr'ornary. Yes — Yes — he'll never be the man he was, till this matter is off his mind, and he comes to his senses like all the rest of mankind. Sarpent, you can't be in airnest, and therefore I shall say but little to your offer. But you're a chief, and will soon be sent out on the war path at head of the parties, and I'll just ask if you'd think of putting your forces into the inimy's hands, afore the battle is fou't?"

“Wah!” ejaculated the Indian.

“Ay — Wah — I know well enough it’s Wah, and altogether Wah — Ra’ally, Serpent, I’m consarned and mortified about you! I never heard so weak an idee come from a chief, and he, too, one that’s already got a name for being wise, young and inexperienced as he is. Canoe you sha’n’t have, so long as the v’ice of fri’ndship and warning can count for any thing.”

“My pale-face friend is right. A cloud came over the face of Chingachgook, and weakness got into his mind, while his eyes were dim. My brother has a good memory for good deeds, and a weak memory for bad. He will forget.”

“Yes, that’s easy enough. Say no more about it chief, but if another of them clouds blow near you, do your endivours to get out of its way. Clouds are bad enough in the weather, but when they come to the reason, it gets to be serious. Now, sit down by me here, and let us calculate our movements a little, for we shall soon either have a truce and a peace, or we shall come to an actyve and bloody war. You see the vagabonds can make logs sarve their turn, as well as the best raftsmen on the rivers, and it would be no great expl’ite for them to invade us in a body. I’ve been thinking of the wisdom of putting all old Tom’s stores into the Ark, of barring and locking up the Castle, and of taking to the Ark, altogether. That is moveable, and by keeping the sail up, and shifting places, we might worry through a great many nights, without them Canada wolves finding a way into our sheep fold!”

Chingachgook listened to this plan with approbation. Did the negotiation fail, there was now little hope that the night would pass without an assault, and the enemy had sagacity enough to understand that in carrying the castle they would probably become masters of all it contained, the offered ransom included, and still retain the advantages they had hitherto gained. Some precaution of the sort appeared to be absolutely necessary, for now the numbers of the Iroquois were known, a night attack could scarcely be successfully met. It would be impossible to prevent the enemy from getting possession of the canoes and the Ark, and the latter itself would be a hold in which the assailants would be as effectually protected against bullets as were those in the building. For a few minutes, both the men thought of sinking the Ark in the shallow water, of bringing the canoes into the house, and of depending altogether on the castle for protection. But reflection satisfied them that, in the end, this expedient would fail. It was so easy to collect logs on the shore, and to construct a raft of almost any size, that it was certain the Iroquois, now they had turned their attention to such means, would resort to them seriously, so long as there was the certainty of success by perseverance. After deliberating maturely, and placing all the considerations fairly before them, the two young beginners in the art of forest warfare settled down into the opinion that the Ark offered the only available means of security. This decision was no sooner come to, than it was communicated to Judith. The girl had no serious objection to make, and all four set about the measures necessary to carrying the plan into execution.

The reader will readily understand that Floating Tom’s worldly goods were of no great amount. A couple of beds, some wearing apparel, the arms and ammunition, a few cooking utensils, with the mysterious and but half examined chest formed the principal items. These were all soon removed, the Ark having been hauled on the eastern side of the building, so that the transfer could be made without being seen from the shore. It was thought unnecessary to disturb the heavier and coarser articles of furniture, as they were not required in the Ark, and were of but little value in themselves. As great caution was necessary in removing the different objects, most of which were passed out of a window with a view to conceal what was going on, it required two or three hours before all could be effected. By the expiration of that time, the raft made its appearance, moving from the shore. Deerslayer immediately had recourse to the glass, by the aid of which he perceived that two warriors were on it, though they appeared to be unarmed. The progress of the raft was slow, a circumstance that formed one of the great advantages that would be possessed by the scow, in any future collision between them, the movements of the latter being comparatively swift and light. As there was time to make the dispositions for the reception of the two dangerous visitors, everything was prepared for them, long before they had got near enough to be hailed. The Serpent and the girls retired into the building, where the former stood near the door, well provided with rifles, while Judith watched the proceedings without through a loop. As for Deerslayer, he had brought a stool to the edge of the platform, at the point towards which the raft was advancing, and taken his seat with his rifle leaning carelessly between his legs.

As the raft drew nearer, every means possessed by the party in the castle was resorted to, in order to ascertain if their visitors had any firearms. Neither Deerslayer nor Chingachgook could discover any, but Judith, unwilling to trust to simple eyesight, thrust the glass through the loop, and directed it towards the hemlock boughs that lay between the two logs of the raft, forming a sort of flooring, as well as a seat for the use of the rowers. When the heavy moving craft was within fifty feet of him, Deerslayer hailed the Hurons, directing them to cease rowing, it not being his intention to permit them to land.

Compliance, of course, was necessary, and the two grim-looking warriors instantly quitted their seats, though the raft continued slowly to approach, until it had driven in much nearer to the platform.

“Are ye chiefs?” demanded Deerslayer with dignity — “Are ye chiefs?—Or have the Mingos sent me warriors without names, on such an ar’n’d? If so, the sooner ye go back, the sooner them will be likely to come that a warrior can talk with.”

“Hugh!” exclaimed the elder of the two on the raft, rolling his glowing eyes over the different objects that were visible in and about the Castle, with a keenness that showed how little escaped him. “My brother is very proud, but Rivenoak (we use the literal translation of the term, writing as we do in English) is a name to make a Delaware turn pale.”

“That’s true, or it’s a lie, Rivenoak, as it may be; but I am not likely to turn pale, seeing that I was born pale. What’s your ar’n’d, and why do you come among light bark canoes, on logs that are not even dug out?”

“The Iroquois are not ducks, to walk on water! Let the pale-faces give them a canoe, and they’ll come in a canoe.”

“That’s more rational, than likely to come to pass. We have but four canoes, and being four persons that’s only one for each of us. We thank you for the offer, howsoever, though we ask leave not to accept it. You are welcome, Iroquois, on your logs.”

“Thanks — My young pale-face warrior — he has got a name — how do the chiefs call him?”

Deerslayer hesitated a moment, and a gleam of pride and human weakness came over him. He smiled, muttered between his teeth, and then looking up proudly, he said — “Mingo, like all who are young and active, I’ve been known by different names, at different times. One of your warriors whose spirit started for the Happy Grounds of your people, as lately as yesterday morning, thought I deserved to be known by the name of Hawkeye, and this because my sight happened to be quicker than his own, when it got to be life or death between us.”

Chingachgook, who was attentively listening to all that passed, heard and understood this proof of passing weakness in his friend, and on a future occasion he questioned him more closely concerning the transaction on the point, where Deerslayer had first taken human life. When he had got the whole truth, he did not fail to communicate it to the tribe, from which time the young hunter was universally known among the Delawares by an appellation so honorably earned. As this, however, was a period posterior to all the incidents of this tale, we shall continue to call the young hunter by the name under which he has been first introduced to the reader. Nor was the Iroquois less struck with the vaunt of the white man. He knew of the death of his comrade, and had no difficulty in understanding the allusion, the intercourse between the conqueror and his victim on that occasion having been seen by several savages on the shore of the lake, who had been stationed at different points just within the margin of bushes to watch the drifting canoes, and who had not time to reach the scene of action, ere the victor had retired. The effect on this rude being of the forest was an exclamation of surprise; then such a smile of courtesy, and wave of the hand, succeeded, as would have done credit to Asiatic diplomacy. The two Iroquois spoke to each other in low tones, and both drew near the end of the raft that was closest to the platform.

“My brother, Hawkeye, has sent a message to the Hurons,” resumed Rivenoak, “and it has made their hearts very glad. They hear he has images of beasts with two tails! Will he show them to his friends?”

“Inimies would be truer,” returned Deerslayer, “but sound isn’t sense, and does little harm. Here is One of the images; I toss it to you under faith of treaties. If it’s not returned, the rifle will settle the p’int between us.”

The Iroquois seemed to acquiesce in the conditions, and Deerslayer arose and prepared to toss one of the elephants to the raft, both parties using all the precaution that was necessary to prevent its loss. As practice renders men expert in such things, the little piece of ivory was soon successfully transferred from one hand to the other, and then followed another scene on the raft, in which astonishment and delight got the mastery of Indian stoicism. These two grim old warriors manifested even more feeling, as they examined the curiously wrought chessman, than had been betrayed by the boy; for, in the case of the latter, recent schooling had interposed its influence; while the men, like all who are sustained by well established characters, were not ashamed to let some of their emotions be discovered. For a few minutes they apparently lost the consciousness of their situation, in the intense scrutiny they bestowed on a material so fine, work so highly wrought, and an animal so extraordinary. The lip of the moose is, perhaps, the nearest approach to the trunk of the elephant that is to be found in the American forest, but this resemblance was far from being sufficiently striking to bring the new creature within the range of their habits and ideas, and the more they studied the image, the greater was their astonishment. Nor did these children of the forest mistake the structure on the back of the elephant for a part of the animal. They were familiar with horses and oxen, and had seen towers in the Canadas, and found nothing surprising in



creatures of burthen. Still, by a very natural association, they supposed the carving meant to represent that the animal they saw was of a strength sufficient to carry a fort on its back; a circumstance that in no degree lessened their wonder.

"Has my pale-face brother any more such beasts?" at last the senior of the Iroquois asked, in a sort of petitioning manner.

"There's more where them came from, Mingo," was the answer; "one is enough, howsoever, to buy off fifty scalps."

"One of my prisoners is a great warrior — tall as a pine — strong as the moose — active as a deer — fierce as the panther! Some day he'll be a great chief, and lead the army of King George!"

"Tut-tut Mingo; Hurry Harry is Hurry Harry, and you'll never make more than a corporal of him, if you do that. He's tall enough, of a sartainty; but that's of no use, as he only hits his head ag'in the branches as he goes through the forest. He's strong too, but a strong body isn't a strong head, and the king's generals are not chosen for their sinews; he's swift, if you will, but a rifle bullet is swifter; and as for fierceness, it's no great ricommend to a soldier; they that think they feel the stoutest often givin' out at the pinch. No, no, you'll niver make Hurry's scalp pass for more than a good head of curly hair, and a rattle pate beneath it!"

"My old prisoner very wise — king of the lake — great warrior, wise counsellor!"

"Well, there's them that might gainsay all this, too, Mingo. A very wise man wouldn't be apt to be taken in so foolish a manner as befell Master Hutter, and if he gives good counsel, he must have listened to very bad in that affair. There's only one king of this lake, and he's a long way off, and isn't likely ever to see it. Floating Tom is some such king of this region, as the wolf that prowls through the woods is king of the forest. A beast with two tails is well worth two such scalps!"

"But my brother has another beast? — He will give two" — holding up as many fingers, "for old father?"

"Floating Tom is no father of mine, but he'll fare none the worse for that. As for giving two beasts for his scalp, and each beast with two tails, it is quite beyond reason. Think yourself well off, Mingo, if you make a much worse trade."

By this time the self-command of Rivenoak had got the better of his wonder, and he began to fall back on his usual habits of cunning, in order to drive the best bargain he could. It would be useless to relate more than the substance of the desultory dialogue that followed, in which the Indian manifested no little management, in endeavoring to recover the ground lost under the influence of surprise. He even affected to doubt whether any original for the image of the beast existed, and asserted that the oldest Indian had never heard a tradition of any such animal. Little did either of them imagine at the time that long ere a century elapsed, the progress of civilization would bring even much more extraordinary and rare animals into that region, as curiosities to be gazed at by the curious, and that the particular beast, about which the disputants contended, would be seen laving its sides and swimming in the very sheet of water, on which they had met.

[The Otsego is a favorite place for the caravan keepers to let their elephants bathe. The writer has seen two at a time, since the publication of this book, swimming about in company.]

As is not uncommon on such occasions, one of the parties got a little warm in the course of the discussion, for Deerslayer met all the arguments and prevarication of his subtle opponent with his own cool directness of manner, and unmoved love of truth. What an elephant was he knew little better than the savage, but he perfectly understood that the carved pieces of ivory must have some such value in the eyes of an Iroquois as a bag of gold or a package of beaver skins would in those of a trader. Under the circumstances, therefore, he felt it to be prudent not to concede too much at first, since there existed a nearly unconquerable obstacle to making the transfers, even after the contracting parties had actually agreed upon the terms. Keeping this difficulty in view, he held the extra chessmen in reserve, as a means of smoothing any difficulty in the moment of need.

At length the savage pretended that further negotiation was useless, since he could not be so unjust to his tribe as to part with the honor and emoluments of two excellent, full grown male scalps for a consideration so trifling as a toy like that he had seen, and he prepared to take his departure. Both parties now felt as men are wont to feel, when a bargain that each is anxious to conclude is on the eve of being broken off, in consequence of too much pertinacity in the way of management. The effect of the disappointment was very different, however, on the respective individuals. Deerslayer was mortified, and filled with regret, for he not only felt for the prisoners, but he also felt deeply for the two girls. The conclusion of the treaty, therefore, left him melancholy and full of regret. With the savage, his defeat produced the desire of revenge. In a moment of excitement, he had loudly announced his intention to say no more, and he felt equally enraged with himself and with his cool opponent, that he had permitted a pale face to manifest more indifference and self-command than an Indian chief.

When he began to urge his raft away from the platform his countenance lowered and his eye glowed, even while he affected a smile of amity and a gesture of courtesy at parting.

It took some little time to overcome the inertia of the logs, and while this was being done by the silent Indian, Rivenoak stalked over the hemlock boughs that lay between the logs in sullen ferocity, eyeing keenly the while the hut, the platform and the person of his late disputant. Once he spoke in low, quick tones to his companion, and he stirred the boughs with his feet like an animal that is restive. At that moment the watchfulness of Deerslayer had a little abated, for he sat musing on the means of renewing the negotiation without giving too much advantage to the other side. It was perhaps fortunate for him that the keen and bright eyes of Judith were as vigilant as ever. At the instant when the young man was least on his guard, and his enemy was the most on the alert, she called out in a warning voice to the former, most opportunely giving the alarm.

“Be on your guard, Deerslayer,” the girl cried —“I see rifles with the glass, beneath the hemlock brush, and the Iroquois is loosening them with his feet!”

It would seem that the enemy had carried their artifices so far as to employ an agent who understood English. The previous dialogue had taken place in his own language, but it was evident by the sudden manner in which his feet ceased their treacherous occupation, and in which the countenance of Rivenoak changed from sullen ferocity to a smile of courtesy, that the call of the girl was understood. Signing to his companion to cease his efforts to set the logs in motion, he advanced to the end of the raft which was nearest to the platform, and spoke.

“Why should Rivenoak and his brother leave any cloud between them,” he said. “They are both wise, both brave, and both generous; they ought to part friends. One beast shall be the price of one prisoner.”

“And, Mingo,” answered the other, delighted to renew the negotiations on almost any terms, and determined to clinch the bargain if possible by a little extra liberality, “you’ll see that a pale-face knows how to pay a full price, when he trades with an open heart, and an open hand. Keep the beast that you had forgotten to give back to me, as you was about to start, and which I forgot to ask for, on account of consarn at parting in anger. Show it to your chiefs. When you bring us our fri’nds, two more shall be added to it, and,” hesitating a moment in distrust of the expediency of so great a concession; then, deciding in its favor —“and, if we see them afore the sun sets, we may find a fourth to make up an even number.”

This settled the matter. Every gleam of discontent vanished from the dark countenance of the Iroquois, and he smiled as graciously, if not as sweetly, as Judith Hutter, herself. The piece already in his possession was again examined, and an ejaculation of pleasure showed how much he was pleased with this unexpected termination of the affair. In point of fact, both he and Deerslayer had momentarily forgotten what had become of the subject of their discussion, in the warmth of their feelings, but such had not been the case with Rivenoak’s companion. This man retained the piece, and had fully made up his mind, were it claimed under such circumstances as to render its return necessary, to drop it in the lake, trusting to his being able to find it again at some future day. This desperate expedient, however, was no longer necessary, and after repeating the terms of agreement, and professing to understand them, the two Indians finally took their departure, moving slowly towards the shore.

“Can any faith be put in such wretches?” asked Judith, when she and Hetty had come out on the platform, and were standing at the side of Deerslayer, watching the dull movement of the logs. “Will they not rather keep the toy they have, and send us off some bloody proofs of their getting the better of us in cunning, by way of boasting? I’ve heard of acts as bad as this.”

“No doubt, Judith; no manner of doubt, if it wasn’t for Indian natur’. But I’m no judge of a red-skin, if that two tail’d beast doesn’t set the whole tribe in some such stir as a stick raises in a beehive! Now, there’s the Sarpent; a man with narves like flint, and no more cur’osity in every day consarns than is befitting prudence; why he was so overcome with the sight of the creatur’, carved as it is in bone, that I felt ashamed for him! That’s just their gifts, howsoever, and one can’t well quarrel with a man for his gifts, when they are lawful. Chingachgook will soon get over his weakness and remember that he’s a chief, and that he comes of a great stock, and has a renowned name to support and uphold; but as for yonder scamps, there’ll be no peace among ’em until they think they’ve got possession of every thing of the natur’ of that bit of carved bone that’s to be found among Thomas Hutter’s stores!”

“They only know of the elephants, and can have no hopes about the other things.”

“That’s true, Judith; still, covetousness is a craving feelin’! They’ll say, if the pale-faces have these cur’ous beasts with

two tails, who knows but they've got some with three, or for that matter with four! That's what the schoolmasters call nat'ral arithmetic, and 'twill be sartain to beset the feelin's of savages. They'll never be easy, till the truth is known."

"Do you think, Deerslayer," inquired Hetty, in her simple and innocent manner, "that the Iroquois won't let father and Hurry go? I read to them several of the very best verses in the whole Bible, and you see what they have done, already."

The hunter, as he always did, listened kindly and even affectionately to Hetty's remarks; then he mused a moment in silence. There was something like a flush on his cheek as he answered, after quite a minute had passed.

"I don't know whether a white man ought to be ashamed, or not, to own he can't read, but such is my case, Judith. You are skilful, I find, in all such matters, while I have only studied the hand of God as it is seen in the hills and the valleys, the mountain-tops, the streams, the forests and the springs. Much l'arning may be got in this way, as well as out of books; and, yet, I sometimes think it is a white man's gift to read! When I hear from the mouths of the Moravians the words of which Hetty speaks, they raise a longing in my mind, and I then think I will know how to read 'em myself; but the game in summer, and the traditions, and lessons in war, and other matters, have always kept me behind hand."

"Shall I teach you, Deerslayer?" asked Hetty, earnestly. "I'm weak-minded, they say, but I can read as well as Judith. It might save your life to know how to read the Bible to the savages, and it will certainly save your soul; for mother told me that, again and again!"

"Thankee, Hetty — yes, thankee, with all my heart. These are like to be too stirring times for much idleness, but after it's peace, and I come to see you ag'in on this lake, then I'll give myself up to it, as if 'twas pleasure and profit in a single business. Perhaps I ought to be ashamed, Judith, that 'tis so; but truth is truth. As for these Iroquois, 't isn't very likely they'll forget a beast with two tails, on account of a varse or two from the Bible. I rather expect they'll give up the prisoners, and trust to some sarcumvenion or other to get 'em back ag'in, with us and all in the castle and the Ark in the bargain. Howsever, we must humour the vagabonds, first to get your father and Hurry out of their hands, and next to keep the peace atween us, until such time as the Serpent there can make out to get off his betrothed wife. If there's any sudden outbreakin' of anger and ferocity, the Indians will send off all their women and children to the camp at once, whereas, by keeping 'em calm and trustful we may manage to meet Hist at the spot she has mentioned. Rather than have the bargain fall through, now, I'd throw in half a dozen of them effigy bow-and-arrow men, such as we've in plenty in the chist."

Judith cheerfully assented, for she would have resigned even the flowered brocade, rather than not redeem her father and please Deerslayer. The prospects of success were now so encouraging as to raise the spirits of all in the castle, though a due watchfulness of the movements of the enemy was maintained. Hour passed after hour, notwithstanding, and the sun had once more begun to fall towards the summits of the western hills, and yet no signs were seen of the return of the raft. By dint of sweeping the shore with the glass, Deerslayer at length discovered a place in the dense and dark woods where, he entertained no doubt, the Iroquois were assembled in considerable numbers. It was near the thicket whence the raft had issued, and a little rill that trickled into the lake announced the vicinity of a spring. Here, then, the savages were probably holding their consultation, and the decision was to be made that went to settle the question of life or death for the prisoners. There was one ground for hope in spite of the delay, however, that Deerslayer did not fail to place before his anxious companions. It was far more probable that the Indians had left their prisoners in the camp, than that they had encumbered themselves by causing them to follow through the woods a party that was out on a merely temporary excursion. If such was the fact, it required considerable time to send a messenger the necessary distance, and to bring the two white men to the spot where they were to embark. Encouraged by these reflections, a new stock of patience was gathered, and the declension of the sun was viewed with less alarm.

The result justified Deerslayer's conjecture. Not long before the sun had finally disappeared, the two logs were seen coming out of the thicket, again, and as it drew near, Judith announced that her father and Hurry, both of them pinioned, lay on the bushes in the centre. As before, the two Indians were rowing. The latter seemed to be conscious that the lateness of the hour demanded unusual exertions, and contrary to the habits of their people, who are ever averse to toil, they labored hard at the rude substitutes for oars. In consequence of this diligence, the raft occupied its old station in about half the time that had been taken in the previous visits.

Even after the conditions were so well understood, and matters had proceeded so far, the actual transfer of the prisoners was not a duty to be executed without difficulty. The Iroquois were compelled to place great reliance on the good faith of their foes, though it was reluctantly given; and was yielded to necessity rather than to confidence. As soon as

Hutter and Hurry should be released, the party in the castle numbered two to one, as opposed to those on the raft, and escape by flight was out of the question, as the former had three bark canoes, to say nothing of the defences of the house and the Ark. All this was understood by both parties, and it is probable the arrangement never could have been completed, had not the honest countenance and manner of Deerslayer wrought their usual effect on Rivenoak.

"My brother knows I put faith in him," said the latter, as he advanced with Hutter, whose legs had been released to enable the old man to ascend to the platform. "One scalp — one more beast."

"Stop, Mingo," interrupted the hunter, "keep your prisoner a moment. I have to go and seek the means of payment."

This excuse, however, though true in part, was principally a fetch. Deerslayer left the platform, and entering the house, he directed Judith to collect all the arms and to conceal them in her own room. He then spoke earnestly to the Delaware, who stood on guard as before, near the entrance of the building, put the three remaining castles in his pocket, and returned.

"You are welcome back to your old abode, Master Hutter," said Deerslayer, as he helped the other up on the platform, slyly passing into the hand of Rivenoak, at the same time, another of the castles. "You'll find your darters right glad to see you, and here's Hetty come herself to say as much in her own behalf."

Here the hunter stopped speaking and broke out into a hearty fit of his silent and peculiar laughter. Hurry's legs were just released, and he had been placed on his feet. So tightly had the ligatures been drawn, that the use of his limbs was not immediately recovered, and the young giant presented, in good sooth, a very helpless and a somewhat ludicrous picture. It was this unusual spectacle, particularly the bewildered countenance, that excited the merriment of Deerslayer.

"You look like a girdled pine in a clearin', Hurry Harry, that is rocking in a gale," said Deerslayer, checking his unseasonable mirth, more from delicacy to the others than from any respect to the liberated captive. "I'm glad, however, to see that you haven't had your hair dressed by any of the Iroquois barbers, in your late visit to their camp."

"Harkee, Deerslayer," returned the other a little fiercely, "it will be prudent for you to deal less in mirth and more in friendship on this occasion. Act like a Christian, for once, and not like a laughing gal in a country school when the master's back is turned, and just tell me whether there's any feet, or not, at the end of these legs of mine. I think I can see them, but as for feelin' they might as well be down on the banks of the Mohawk, as be where they seem to be."

"You've come off whole, Hurry, and that's not a little," answered the other, secretly passing to the Indian the remainder of the stipulated ransom, and making an earnest sign at the same moment for him to commence his retreat. "You've come off whole, feet and all, and are only a little numb from a tight fit of the withes. Natur'll soon set the blood in motion, and then you may begin to dance, to celebrate what I call a most wonderful and unexpected deliverance from a den of wolves." Deerslayer released the arms of his friends, as each landed, and the two were now stamping and limping about on the platform, growling and uttering denunciations as they endeavored to help the returning circulation. They had been tethered too long, however, to regain the use of their limbs in a moment, and the Indians being quite as diligent on their return as on their advance, the raft was fully a hundred yards from the castle when Hurry, turning accidentally in that direction, discovered how fast it was getting beyond the reach of his vengeance. By this time he could move with tolerable facility, though still numb and awkward. Without considering his own situation, however, he seized the rifle that leaned against the shoulder of Deerslayer, and attempted to cock and present it. The young hunter was too quick for him. Seizing the piece he wrenched it from the hands of the giant, not, however, until it had gone off in the struggle, when pointed directly upward. It is probable that Deerslayer could have prevailed in such a contest, on account of the condition of Hurry's limbs, but the instant the gun went off, the latter yielded, and stumped towards the house, raising his legs at each step quite a foot from the ground, from an uncertainty of the actual position of his feet. But he had been anticipated by Judith. The whole stock of Hutter's arms, which had been left in the building as a resource in the event of a sudden outbreaking of hostilities, had been removed, and were already secreted, agreeably to Deerslayer's directions. In consequence of this precaution, no means offered by which March could put his designs in execution. Disappointed in his vengeance, Hurry seated himself, and like Hutter, for half an hour, he was too much occupied in endeavoring to restore the circulation, and in regaining the use of his limbs, to indulge in any other reflections. By the end of this time the raft had disappeared, and night was beginning to throw her shadows once more over the whole sylvan scene. Before darkness had completely set in, and while the girls were preparing the evening meal, Deerslayer related to Hutter an outline of events that had taken place, and gave him a history of the means he had adopted for the security of his children and property.

## CHAPTER 15

*"As long as Edward rules thys lande,  
Ne quiet you wyllle ye know;  
Your sonnes and husbandes shall be slayne,  
And brookes with bloode shall 'flowe.'*

*"You leave youre geode and lawfull kyng,  
Whenne ynne adversity;  
Like me, untoe the true cause stycke,  
And for the true cause dye."*

—CHATTERTON.

The calm of evening was again in singular contrast, while its gathering gloom was in as singular unison with the passions of men. The sun was set, and the rays of the retiring luminary had ceased to gild the edges of the few clouds that had sufficient openings to admit the passage of its fading light. The canopy overhead was heavy and dense, promising another night of darkness, but the surface of the lake was scarcely disturbed by a ripple. There was a little air, though it scarce deserved to be termed wind. Still, being damp and heavy, it had a certain force. The party in the castle were as gloomy and silent as the scene. The two ransomed prisoners felt humbled and discoloured, but their humility partook of the rancour of revenge. They were far more disposed to remember the indignity with which they had been treated during the last few hours of their captivity, than to feel grateful for the previous indulgence. Then that keen-sighted monitor, conscience, by reminding them of the retributive justice of all they had endured, goaded them rather to turn the tables on their enemies than to accuse themselves. As for the others, they were thoughtful equally from regret and joy. Deerslayer and Judith felt most of the former sensation, though from very different causes, while Hetty for the moment was perfectly happy. The Delaware had also lively pictures of felicity in the prospect of so soon regaining his betrothed. Under such circumstances, and in this mood, all were taking the evening meal.

"Old Tom!" cried Hurry, bursting into a fit of boisterous laughter, "you look'd amazin'ly like a tethered bear, as you was stretched on them hemlock boughs, and I only wonder you didn't growl more. Well, it's over, and syth's and lamentations won't mend the matter! There's the blackguard Rivenoak, he that brought us off has an uncommon scalp, and I'd give as much for it myself as the Colony. Yes, I feel as rich as the governor in these matters now, and will lay down with them doubloon for doubloon. Judith, darling, did you mourn for me much, when I was in the hands of the Philipsteins?"

The last were a family of German descent on the Mohawk, to whom Hurry had a great antipathy, and whom he had confounded with the enemies of Judea.

"Our tears have raised the lake, Hurry March, as you might have seen by the shore!" returned Judith, with a feigned levity that she was far from feeling. "That Hetty and I should have grieved for father was to be expected; but we fairly rained tears for you."

"We were sorry for poor Hurry, as well as for father, Judith!" put in her innocent and unconscious sister.

"True, girl, true; but we feel sorrow for everybody that's in trouble, you know," returned the other in a quick, admonitory manner and a low tone. "Nevertheless, we are glad to see you, Master March, and out of the hands of the Philipsteins, too."

"Yes, they're a bad set, and so is the other brood of 'em, down on the river. It's a wonderment to me how you got us off, Deerslayer; and I forgive you the interference that prevented my doin' justice on that vagabond, for this small service. Let us into the secret, that we may do you the same good turn, at need. Was it by lying, or by coaxing?"

"By neither, Hurry, but by buying. We paid a ransom for you both, and that, too, at a price so high you had well be on your guard ag'in another captivity, lest our stock of goods shouldn't hold out."

"A ransom! Old Tom has paid the fiddler, then, for nothing of mine would have bought off the hair, much less the skin. I didn't think men as keen set as them vagabonds would let a fellow up so easy, when they had him fairly at a close hug, and floored. But money is money, and somehow it's unnat'ral hard to withstand. Indian or white man, 'tis pretty much the same. It must be owned, Judith, there's a considerable of human natur' in mankind ginirally, arter all!"

Hutter now rose, and signing to Deerslayer, he led him to an inner room, where, in answer to his questions, he first learned the price that had been paid for his release. The old man expressed neither resentment nor surprise at the inroad

that had been made on his chest, though he did manifest some curiosity to know how far the investigation of its contents had been carried. He also inquired where the key had been found. The habitual frankness of Deerslayer prevented any prevarication, and the conference soon terminated by the return of the two to the outer room, or that which served for the double purpose of parlour and kitchen.

"I wonder if it's peace or war, between us and the savages!" exclaimed Hurry, just as Deerslayer, who had paused for a single instant, listened attentively, and was passing through the outer door without stopping. "This givin' up captives has a friendly look, and when men have traded together on a fair and honourable footing they ought to part fri'nds, for that occasion at least. Come back, Deerslayer, and let us have your judgment, for I'm beginnin' to think more of you, since your late behaviour, than I used to do."

"There's an answer to your question, Hurry, since you're in such haste to come ag'in to blows."

As Deerslayer spoke, he threw on the table on which the other was reclining with one elbow a sort of miniature fagot, composed of a dozen sticks bound tightly together with a deer-skin thong. March seized it eagerly, and holding it close to a blazing knot of pine that lay on the hearth, and which gave out all the light there was in the room, ascertained that the ends of the several sticks had been dipped in blood.

"If this isn't plain English," said the reckless frontier man, "it's plain Indian! Here's what they call a diclaration of war, down at York, Judith. How did you come by this defiance, Deerslayer?"

"Fairly enough. It lay not a minut' since, in what you call Floatin' Tom's door-yard."

"How came it there?"

"It never fell from the clouds, Judith, as little toads sometimes do, and then it don't rain."

"You must prove where it come from, Deerslayer, or we shall suspect some design to skear them that would have lost their wits long ago, if fear could drive 'em away."

Deerslayer had approached a window, and cast a glance out of it on the dark aspect of the lake. As if satisfied with what he beheld, he drew near Hurry, and took the bundle of sticks into his own hand, examining it attentively.

"Yes, this is an Indian declaration of war, sure enough," he said, "and it's a proof how little you're suited to be on the path it has travelled, Harry March, that it has got here, and you never the wiser as to the means. The savages may have left the scalp on your head, but they must have taken off the ears; else you'd have heard the stirring of the water made by the lad as he come off ag'in on his two logs. His ar'n'd was to throw these sticks at our door, as much as to say, we've struck the war-post since the trade, and the next thing will be to strike you."

"The prowling wolves! But hand me that rifle, Judith, and I'll send an answer back to the vagabonds through their messenger."

"Not while I stand by, Master March," coolly put in Deerslayer, motioning for the other to forbear. "Faith is faith, whether given to a red-skin, or to a Christian. The lad lighted a knot, and came off fairly under its blaze to give us this warning; and no man here should harm him, while empl'yed on such an ar'n'd. There's no use in words, for the boy is too cunning to leave the knot burning, now his business is done, and the night is already too dark for a rifle to have any sartainty."

"That may be true enough, as to a gun, but there's virtue still in a canoe," answered Hurry, passing towards the door with enormous strides, carrying a rifle in his hands. "The being doesn't live that shall stop me from following and bringing back that riptyle's scalp. The more on 'em that you crush in the egg, the fewer there'll be to dart at you in the woods!"

Judith trembled like the aspen, she scarce knew why herself, though there was the prospect of a scene of violence; for if Hurry was fierce and overbearing in the consciousness of his vast strength, Deerslayer had about him the calm determination that promises greater perseverance, and a resolution more likely to effect its object. It was the stern, resolute eye of the latter, rather than the noisy vehemence of the first, that excited her apprehensions. Hurry soon reached the spot where the canoe was fastened, but not before Deerslayer had spoken in a quick, earnest voice to the Serpent, in Delaware. The latter had been the first, in truth, to hear the sounds of the oars, and he had gone upon the platform in jealous watchfulness. The light satisfied him that a message was coming, and when the boy cast his bundle of sticks at his feet, it neither moved his anger nor induced surprise. He merely stood at watch, rifle in hand, to make certain that no treachery lay behind the defiance. As Deerslayer now called to him, he stepped into the canoe, and quick as thought removed the paddles. Hurry was furious when he found that he was deprived of the means of proceeding. He first

approached the Indian with loud menaces, and even Deerslayer stood aghast at the probable consequences. March shook his sledge-hammer fists and flourished his arms as he drew near the Indian, and all expected he would attempt to fell the Delaware to the earth; one of them, at least, was well aware that such an experiment would be followed by immediate bloodshed. But even Hurry was awed by the stern composure of the chief, and he, too, knew that such a man was not to be outraged with impunity; he therefore turned to vent his rage on Deerslayer, where he foresaw no consequences so terrible. What might have been the result of this second demonstration if completed, is unknown, since it was never made.

"Hurry," said a gentle, soothing voice at his elbow, "it's wicked to be so angry, and God will not overlook it. The Iroquois treated you well, and they didn't take your scalp, though you and father wanted to take theirs."

The influence of mildness on passion is well known. Hetty, too, had earned a sort of consideration, that had never before been enjoyed by her, through the self-devotion and decision of her recent conduct. Perhaps her established mental imbecility, by removing all distrust of a wish to control, aided her influence. Let the cause be as questionable as it might, the effect was sufficiently certain. Instead of throttling his old fellow-traveler, Hurry turned to the girl and poured out a portion of his discontent, if none of his anger, in her attentive ears.

"Tis too bad, Hetty!" he exclaimed; "as bad as a county gaol or a lack of beaver, to get a creatur' into your very trap, then to see it get off. As much as six first quality skins, in valie, has paddled off on them clumsy logs, when twenty strokes of a well-turned paddle would overtake 'em. I say in valie, for as to the boy in the way of natur', he is only a boy, and is worth neither more nor less than one. Deerslayer, you've been ontrue to your fri'nds in letting such a chance slip through my fingers well as your own."

The answer was given quietly, but with a voice as steady as a fearless nature and the consciousness of rectitude could make it. "I should have been untrue to the right, had I done otherwise," returned the Deerslayer, steadily; "and neither you, nor any other man has authority to demand that much of me. The lad came on a lawful business, and the meanest red-skin that roams the woods would be ashamed of not respecting his ar'n'd. But he's now far beyond your reach, Master March, and there's little use in talking, like a couple of women, of what can no longer be helped."

So saying, Deerslayer turned away, like one resolved to waste no more words on the subject, while Hutter pulled Harry by the sleeve, and led him into the ark. There they sat long in private conference. In the mean time, the Indian and his friend had their secret consultation; for, though it wanted some three or four hours to the rising of the star, the former could not abstain from canvassing his scheme, and from opening his heart to the other. Judith, too, yielded to her softer feelings, and listened to the whole of Hetty's artless narrative of what occurred after she landed. The woods had few terrors for either of these girls, educated as they had been, and accustomed as they were to look out daily at their rich expanse or to wander beneath their dark shades; but the elder sister felt that she would have hesitated about thus venturing alone into an Iroquois camp. Concerning Hist, Hetty was not very communicative. She spoke of her kindness and gentleness and of the meeting in the forest; but the secret of Chingachgook was guarded with a shrewdness and fidelity that many a sharper-witted girl might have failed to display.

At length the several conferences were broken up by the reappearance of Hutter on the platform. Here he assembled the whole party, and communicated as much of his intentions as he deemed expedient. Of the arrangement made by Deerslayer, to abandon the castle during the night and to take refuge in the ark, he entirely approved. It struck him as it had the others, as the only effectual means of escaping destruction. Now that the savages had turned their attention to the construction of rafts, no doubt could exist of their at least making an attempt to carry the building, and the message of the bloody sticks sufficiently showed their confidence in their own success. In short, the old man viewed the night as critical, and he called on all to get ready as soon as possible, in order to abandon the dwellings temporarily at least, if not forever.

These communications made, everything proceeded promptly and with intelligence; the castle was secured in the manner already described, the canoes were withdrawn from the dock and fastened to the ark by the side of the other; the few necessities that had been left in the house were transferred to the cabin, the fire was extinguished and all embarked.

The vicinity of the hills, with their drapery of pines, had the effect to render nights that were obscure darker than common on the lake. As usual, however, a belt of comparative light was etched through the centre of the sheet, while it was within the shadows of the mountains that the gloom rested most heavily on the water. The island, or castle, stood in this belt of comparative light, but still the night was so dark as to cover the aperture of the ark. At the distance of an observer on the shore her movements could not be seen at all, more particularly as a background of dark hillside filled up the

perspective of every view that was taken diagonally or directly across the water. The prevailing wind on the lakes of that region is west, but owing to the avenues formed by the mountains it is frequently impossible to tell the true direction of the currents, as they often vary within short distances and brief differences of time. This is truer in light fluctuating puffs of air than in steady breezes; though the squalls of even the latter are familiarly known to be uncertain and baffling in all mountainous regions and narrow waters. On the present occasion, Hutter himself (as he shoved the ark from her berth at the side of the platform) was at a loss to pronounce which way the wind blew. In common, this difficulty was solved by the clouds, which, floating high above the hill tops, as a matter of course obeyed the currents; but now the whole vault of heaven seemed a mass of gloomy wall. Not an opening of any sort was visible, and Chingachgook was already trembling lest the non-appearance of the star might prevent his betrothed from being punctual to her appointment. Under these circumstances, Hutter hoisted his sail, seemingly with the sole intention of getting away from the castle, as it might be dangerous to remain much longer in its vicinity. The air soon filled the cloth, and when the scow was got under command, and the sail was properly trimmed, it was found that the direction was southerly, inclining towards the eastern shore. No better course offering for the purposes of the party, the singular craft was suffered to skim the surface of the water in this direction for more than hour, when a change in the currents of the air drove them over towards the camp.

Deerslayer watched all the movements of Hutter and Harry with jealous attention. At first, he did not know whether to ascribe the course they held to accident or to design; but he now began to suspect the latter. Familiar as Hutter was with the lake, it was easy to deceive one who had little practice on the water; and let his intentions be what they might, it was evident, ere two hours had elapsed, that the ark had got sufficient space to be within a hundred rods of the shore, directly abreast of the known position of the camp. For a considerable time previously to reaching this point, Hurry, who had some knowledge of the Algonquin language, had been in close conference with the Indian, and the result was now announced by the latter to Deerslayer, who had been a cold, not to say distrusted, looker-on of all that passed.

“My old father, and my young brother, the Big Pine,” — for so the Delaware had named March — “want to see Huron scalps at their belts,” said Chingachgook to his friend. “There is room for some on the girdle of the Serpent, and his people will look for them when he goes back to his village. Their eyes must not be left long in a fog, but they must see what they look for. I know that my brother has a white hand; he will not strike even the dead. He will wait for us; when we come back, he will not hide his face from shame for his friend. The great Serpent of the Mohicans must be worthy to go on the war-path with Hawkeye.”

“Ay, ay, Serpent, I see how it is; that name’s to stick, and in time I shall get to be known by it instead of Deerslayer; well, if such honours will come, the humblest of us all must be willing to abide by ’em. As for your looking for scalps, it belongs to your gifts, and I see no harm in it. Be merciful, Serpent, howsoever; be merciful, I beseech of you. It surely can do no harm to a red-skin’s honour to show a little marcy. As for the old man, the father of two young women, who might ripen better feelin’s in his heart, and Harry March, here, who, pine as he is, might better bear the fruit of a more Christianized tree, as for them two, I leave them in the hands of the white man’s God. Wasn’t it for the bloody sticks, no man should go ag’in the Mingos this night, seein’ that it would dishonor our faith and characters; but them that crave blood can’t complain if blood is shed at their call. Still, Serpent, you can be merciful. Don’t begin your career with the wails of women and the cries of children. Bear yourself so that Hist will smile, and not weep, when she meets you. Go, then; and the Manitou presarve you!”

“My brother will stay here with the scow. Wah will soon be standing on the shore waiting, and Chingachgook must hasten.”

The Indian then joined his two co-adventurers, and first lowering the sail, they all three entered the canoe, and left the side of the ark. Neither Hutter nor March spoke to Deerslayer concerning their object, or the probable length of their absence. All this had been confided to the Indian, who had acquitted himself of the trust with characteristic brevity. As soon as the canoe was out of sight, and that occurred ere the paddles had given a dozen strokes, Deerslayer made the best dispositions he could to keep the ark as nearly stationary as possible; and then he sat down in the end of the scow, to chew the cud of his own bitter reflections. It was not long, however, before he was joined by Judith, who sought every occasion to be near him, managing her attack on his affections with the address that was suggested by native coquetry, aided by no little practice, but which received much of its most dangerous power from the touch of feeling that threw around her manner, voice, accents, thoughts, and acts, the indescribable witchery of natural tenderness. Leaving the young hunter exposed to these dangerous assailants, it has become our more immediate business to follow the party in the canoe to the



shore.

The controlling influence that led Hutter and Hurry to repeat their experiment against the camp was precisely that which had induced the first attempt, a little heightened, perhaps, by the desire of revenge. But neither of these two rude beings, so ruthless in all things that touched the rights and interests of the red man, thought possessing veins of human feeling on other matters, was much actuated by any other desire than a heartless longing for profit. Hurry had felt angered at his sufferings, when first liberated, it is true, but that emotion soon disappeared in the habitual love of gold, which he sought with the reckless avidity of a needy spendthrift, rather than with the ceaseless longings of a miser. In short, the motive that urged them both so soon to go against the Hurons, was an habitual contempt of their enemy, acting on the unceasing cupidity of prodigality. The additional chances of success, however, had their place in the formation of the second enterprise. It was known that a large portion of the warriors — perhaps all — were encamped for the night abreast of the castle, and it was hoped that the scalps of helpless victims would be the consequence. To confess the truth, Hutter in particular — he who had just left two daughters behind him — expected to find few besides women and children in the camp. The fact had been but slightly alluded to in his communications with Hurry, and with Chingachgook it had been kept entirely out of view. If the Indian thought of it at all, it was known only to himself.

Hutter steered the canoe; Hurry had manfully taken his post in the bows, and Chingachgook stood in the centre. We say stood, for all three were so skilled in the management of that species of frail bark, as to be able to keep erect positions in the midst of the darkness. The approach to the shore was made with great caution, and the landing effected in safety. The three now prepared their arms, and began their tiger-like approach upon the camp. The Indian was on the lead, his two companions treading in his footsteps with a stealthy cautiousness of manner that rendered their progress almost literally noiseless. Occasionally a dried twig snapped under the heavy weight of the gigantic Hurry, or the blundering clumsiness of the old man; but, had the Indian walked on air, his step could not have seemed lighter. The great object was first to discover the position of the fire, which was known to be the centre of the whole encampment. At length the keen eye of Chingachgook caught a glimpse of this important guide. It was glimmering at a distance among the trunks of trees. There was no blaze, but merely a single smouldering brand, as suited the hour; the savages usually retiring and rising with the revolutions of the sun.

As soon as a view was obtained of this beacon, the progress of the adventurers became swifter and more certain. In a few minutes they got to the edge of the circle of little huts. Here they stopped to survey their ground, and to concert their movements. The darkness was so deep as to render it difficult to distinguish anything but the glowing brand, the trunks of the nearest trees, and the endless canopy of leaves that veiled the clouded heaven. It was ascertained, however, that a hut was quite near, and Chingachgook attempted to reconnoitre its interior. The manner in which the Indian approached the place that was supposed to contain enemies, resembled the wily advances of the cat on the bird. As he drew near, he stooped to his hands and knees, for the entrance was so low as to require this attitude, even as a convenience. Before trusting his head inside, however, he listened long to catch the breathing of sleepers. No sound was audible, and this human Serpent thrust his head in at the door, or opening, as another serpent would have peered in on the nest. Nothing rewarded the hazardous experiment; for, after feeling cautiously with a hand, the place was found to be empty.

The Delaware proceeded in the same guarded manner to one or two more of the huts, finding all in the same situation. He then returned to his companions, and informed them that the Hurons had deserted their camp. A little further inquiry corroborated this fact, and it only remained to return to the canoe. The different manner in which the adventurers bore the disappointment is worthy of a passing remark. The chief, who had landed solely with the hope of acquiring renown, stood stationary, leaning against a tree, waiting the pleasure of his companions. He was mortified, and a little surprised, it is true; but he bore all with dignity, falling back for support on the sweeter expectations that still lay in reserve for that evening. It was true, he could not now hope to meet his mistress with the proofs of his daring and skill on his person, but he might still hope to meet her; and the warrior, who was zealous in the search, might always hope to be honored. On the other hand, Hutter and Hurry, who had been chiefly instigated by the basest of all human motives, the thirst of gain, could scarce control their feelings. They went prowling among the huts, as if they expected to find some forgotten child or careless sleeper; and again and again did they vent their spite on the insensible huts, several of which were actually torn to pieces, and scattered about the place. Nay, they even quarrelled with each other, and fierce reproaches passed between them. It is possible some serious consequences might have occurred, had not the Delaware interfered to remind them of the danger of being so unguarded, and of the necessity of returning to the ark. This checked the dispute, and in a few

minutes they were paddling sullenly back to the spot where they hoped to find that vessel.

It has been said that Judith took her place at the side of Deerslayer, soon after the adventurers departed. For a short time the girl was silent, and the hunter was ignorant which of the sisters had approached him, but he soon recognized the rich, full-spirited voice of the elder, as her feelings escaped in words.

"This is a terrible life for women, Deerslayer!" she exclaimed. "Would to Heaven I could see an end of it!"

"The life is well enough, Judith," was the answer, "being pretty much as it is used or abused. What would you wish to see in its place?"

"I should be a thousand times happier to live nearer to civilized beings — where there are farms and churches, and houses built as it might be by Christian hands; and where my sleep at night would be sweet and tranquil! A dwelling near one of the forts would be far better than this dreary place where we live!"

"Nay, Judith, I can't agree too lightly in the truth of all this. If forts are good to keep off inimies, they sometimes hold inimies of their own. I don't think 'twould be for your good, or the good of Hetty, to live near one; and if I must say what I think, I'm afeard you are a little too near as it is." Deerslayer went on, in his own steady, earnest manner, for the darkness concealed the tints that colored the cheeks of the girl almost to the brightness of crimson, while her own great efforts suppressed the sounds of the breathing that nearly choked her. "As for farms, they have their uses, and there's them that like to pass their lives on 'em; but what comfort can a man look for in a clearin', that he can't find in double quantities in the forest? If air, and room, and light, are a little craved, the windrows and the streams will furnish 'em, or here are the lakes for such as have bigger longings in that way; but where are you to find your shades, and laughing springs, and leaping brooks, and venerable trees, a thousand years old, in a clearin'? You don't find them, but you find their disabled trunks, marking the 'arth like headstones in a graveyard. It seems to me that the people who live in such places must be always thinkin' of their own inds, and of universal decay; and that, too, not of the decay that is brought about by time and natur', but the decay that follows waste and violence. Then as to churches, they are good, I suppose, else wouldn't good men uphold 'em. But they are not altogether necessary. They call 'em the temples of the Lord; but, Judith, the whole 'arth is a temple of the Lord to such as have the right mind. Neither forts nor churches make people happier of themselves. Moreover, all is contradiction in the settlements, while all is concord in the woods. Forts and churches almost always go together, and yet they're downright contradictions; churches being for peace, and forts for war. No, no — give me the strong places of the wilderness, which is the trees, and the churches, too, which are arbors raised by the hand of natur'."

"Woman is not made for scenes like these, Deerslayer, scenes of which we shall have no end, as long as this war lasts."

"If you mean women of white colour, I rather think you're not far from the truth, gal; but as for the females of the redmen, such visitations are quite in character. Nothing would make Hist, now, the bargained wife of yonder Delaware, happier than to know that he is at this moment prowling around his nat'ral inimies, striving after a scalp."

"Surely, surely, Deerslayer, she cannot be a woman, and not feel concern when she thinks the man she loves is in danger!"

"She doesn't think of the danger, Judith, but of the honor; and when the heart is desperately set on such feelin's, why, there is little room to crowd in fear. Hist is a kind, gentle, laughing, pleasant creatur', but she loves honor, as well as any Delaware gal I ever know'd. She's to meet the Sarpent an hour hence, on the p'int where Hetty landed, and no doubt she has her anxiety about it, like any other woman; but she'd be all the happier did she know that her lover was at this moment waylaying a Mingo for his scalp."

"If you really believe this, Deerslayer, no wonder you lay so much stress on gifts. Certain am I, that no white girl could feel anything but misery while she believed her betrothed in danger of his life! Nor do I suppose even you, unmoved and calm as you ever seem to be, could be at peace if you believed your Hist in danger."

"That's a different matter — 'tis altogether a different matter, Judith. Woman is too weak and gentle to be intended to run such risks, and man must feel for her. Yes, I rather think that's as much red natur' as it's white. But I have no Hist, nor am I like to have; for I hold it wrong to mix colours, any way except in friendship and sarvices."

"In that you are and feel as a white man should! As for Hurry Harry, I do think it would be all the same to him whether his wife were a squaw or a governor's daughter, provided she was a little comely, and could help to keep his craving stomach full."

"You do March injustice, Judith; yes, you do. The poor fellow dotes on you, and when a man has ra'ally set his heart on

such a creatur' it isn't a Mingo, or even a Delaware gal, that'll be likely to unsettle his mind. You may laugh at such men as Hurry and I, for we're rough and untaught in the ways of books and other knowledge; but we've our good p'int, as well as our bad ones. An honest heart is not to be despised, gal, even though it be not versed in all the niceties that please the female fancy."

"You, Deerslayer! And do you — can you, for an instant, suppose I place you by the side of Harry March? No, no, I am not so far gone in dullness as that. No one — man or woman — could think of naming your honest heart, manly nature, and simple truth, with the boisterous selfishness, greedy avarice, and overbearing ferocity of Harry March. The very best that can be said of him, is to be found in his name of Hurry Skurry, which, if it means no great harm, means no great good. Even my father, following his feelings with the other, as he is doing at this moment, well knows the difference between you. This I know, for he said as much to me, in plain language."

Judith was a girl of quick sensibilities and of impetuous feelings; and, being under few of the restraints that curtail the manifestations of maiden emotions among those who are educated in the habits of civilized life, she sometimes betrayed the latter with a feeling that was so purely natural as to place it as far above the wiles of coquetry as it was superior to its heartlessness. She had now even taken one of the hard hands of the hunter and pressed it between both her own, with a warmth and earnestness that proved how sincere was her language. It was perhaps fortunate that she was checked by the very excess of her feelings, since the same power might have urged her on to avow all that her father had said — the old man not having been satisfied with making a comparison favorable to Deerslayer, as between the hunter and Hurry, but having actually, in his blunt rough way, briefly advised his daughter to cast off the latter entirely, and to think of the former as a husband. Judith would not willingly have said this to any other man, but there was so much confidence awakened by the guileless simplicity of Deerslayer, that one of her nature found it a constant temptation to overstep the bounds of habit. She went no further, however, immediately relinquishing the hand, and falling back on a reserve that was more suited to her sex, and, indeed, to her natural modesty.

"Thankee, Judith, thankee with all my heart," returned the hunter, whose humility prevented him from placing any flattering interpretation on either the conduct or the language of the girl. "Thankee as much as if it was all true. Harry's sightly — yes, he's as sightly as the tallest pine of the mountains, and the Sarpent has named him accordingly; however, some fancy good looks, and some fancy good conduct, only. Hurry has one advantage, and it depends on himself whether he'll have t'other or — Hark! That's your father's voice, gal, and he speaks like a man who's riled at something."

"God save us from any more of these horrible scenes!" exclaimed Judith, bending her face to her knees, and endeavoring to exclude the discordant sounds, by applying her hands to her ears. "I sometimes wish I had no father!"

This was bitterly said, and the repinings which extorted the words were bitterly felt. It is impossible to say what might next have escaped her had not a gentle, low voice spoken at her elbow.

"Judith, I ought to have read a chapter to father and Hurry!" said the innocent but terrified speaker, "and that would have kept them from going again on such an errand. Do you call to them, Deerslayer, and tell them I want them, and that it will be good for them both if they'll return and hearken to my words."

"Ah's me! Poor Hetty, you little know the cravin's for gold and revenge, if you believe they are so easily turned aside from their longin's! But this is an uncommon business in more ways than one, Judith. I hear your father and Hurry growling like bears, and yet no noise comes from the mouth of the young chief. There's an ind of secrecy, and yet his whoop, which ought to ring in the mountains, accordin' to rule in such sarcumstances, is silent!"

"Justice may have alighted on him, and his death have saved the lives of the innocent."

"Not it — not it — the Sarpent is not the one to suffer if that's to be the law. Sartainly there has been no onset, and 'tis most likely that the camp's deserted, and the men are comin' back disapp'inted. That accounts for the growls of Hurry and the silence of the Sarpent."

Just at this instant a fall of a paddle was heard in the canoe, for vexation made March reckless. Deerslayer felt convinced that his conjecture was true. The sail being down, the ark had not drifted far; and ere many minutes he heard Chingachgook, in a low, quiet tone, directing Hutter how to steer in order to reach it. In less time than it takes to tell the fact, the canoe touched the scow, and the adventurers entered the latter. Neither Hutter nor Hurry spoke of what had occurred. But the Delaware, in passing his friend, merely uttered the words "fire's out," which, if not literally true, sufficiently explained the truth to his listener.

It was now a question as to the course to be steered. A short surly conference was held, when Hutter decided that the wisest way would be to keep in motion as the means most likely to defeat any attempt at a surprise — announcing his own and March's intention to requite themselves for the loss of sleep during their captivity, by lying down. As the air still baffled and continued light, it was finally determined to sail before it, let it come in what direction it might, so long as it did not blow the ark upon the strand. This point settled, the released prisoners helped to hoist the sail, and they threw themselves upon two of the pallets, leaving Deerslayer and his friend to look after the movements of the craft. As neither of the latter was disposed to sleep, on account of the appointment with Hist, this arrangement was acceptable to all parties. That Judith and Hetty remained up also, in no manner impaired the agreeable features of this change.

For some time the scow rather drifted than sailed along the western shore, following a light southerly current of the air. The progress was slow — not exceeding a couple of miles in the hour — but the two men perceived that it was not only carrying them towards the point they desired to reach, but at a rate that was quite as fast as the hour yet rendered necessary. But little more was said the while even by the girls; and that little had more reference to the rescue of Hist than to any other subject. The Indian was calm to the eye, but as minute after minute passed, his feelings became more and more excited, until they reached a state that might have satisfied the demands of even the most exacting mistress. Deerslayer kept the craft as much in the bays as was prudent, for the double purpose of sailing within the shadows of the woods, and of detecting any signs of an encampment they might pass on the shore. In this manner they doubled one low point, and were already in the bay that was terminated north by the goal at which they aimed. The latter was still a quarter of a mile distant, when Chingachgook came silently to the side of his friend and pointed to a place directly ahead. A small fire was glimmering just within the verge of the bushes that lined the shore on the southern side of the point-leaving no doubt that the Indians had suddenly removed their camp to the very place, or at least the very projection of land where Hist had given them the rendezvous!



## CHAPTER 16

*"I hear thee babbling to the vale  
Of sunshine and of flowers,  
But unto me thou bring'st a tale  
Of visionary hours."*

—WORDSWORTH.

One discovery mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter was of great moment in the eyes of Deerslayer and his friend. In the first place, there was the danger, almost the certainty, that Hutter and Hurry would make a fresh attempt on this camp, should they awake and ascertain its position. Then there was the increased risk of landing to bring off Hist; and there were the general uncertainty and additional hazards that must follow from the circumstance that their enemies had begun to change their positions. As the Delaware was aware that the hour was near when he ought to repair to the rendezvous, he no longer thought of trophies torn from his foes, and one of the first things arranged between him and his associate was to permit the two others to sleep on, lest they should disturb the execution of their plans by substituting some of their own. The ark moved slowly, and it would have taken fully a quarter of an hour to reach the point, at the rate at which they were going, thus affording time for a little forethought. The Indians, in the wish to conceal their fire from those who were thought to be still in the castle, had placed it so near the southern side of the point as to render it extremely difficult to shut it in by the bushes, though Deerslayer varied the direction of the scow both to the right and to the left, in the hope of being able to effect that object.

"There's one advantage, Judith, in finding that fire so near the water," he said, while executing these little manoeuvres, "since it shows the Mingos believe we are in the hut, and our coming on 'em from this quarter will be an unlooked for event. But it's lucky Harry March and your father are asleep, else we should have 'em prowling after scalps ag'in. Ha! there — the bushes are beginning to shut in the fire — and now it can't be seen at all!"

Deerslayer waited a little to make certain that he had at last gained the desired position, when he gave the signal agreed on, and Chingachgook let go the grapnel and lowered the sail.

The situation in which the ark now lay had its advantages and its disadvantages. The fire had been hid by sheering towards the shore, and the latter was nearer, perhaps, than was desirable. Still, the water was known to be very deep further off in the lake, and anchoring in deep water, under the circumstances in which the party was placed, was to be avoided, if possible. It was also believed no raft could be within miles; and though the trees in the darkness appeared almost to overhang the scow, it would not be easy to get off to her without using a boat. The intense darkness that prevailed so close in with the forest, too, served as an effectual screen, and so long as care was had not to make a noise, there was little or no danger of being detected. All these things Deerslayer pointed out to Judith, instructing her as to the course she was to follow in the event of an alarm; for it was thought to the last degree inexpedient to arouse the sleepers, unless it might be in the greatest emergency.

"And now, Judith, as we understand one another, it is time the Sarpent and I had taken to the canoe," the hunter concluded. "The star has not risen yet, it's true, but it soon must, though none of us are likely to be any the wiser for it tonight, on account of the clouds. Howsoever, Hist has a ready mind, and she's one of them that doesn't always need to have a thing afore her, to see it. I'll warrant you she'll not be either two minutes or two feet out of the way, unless them jealous vagabonds, the Mingos, have taken the alarm, and put her as a stool-pigeon to catch us, or have hid her away, in order to prepare her mind for a Huron instead of a Mohican husband."

"Deerslayer," interrupted the girl, earnestly; "this is a most dangerous service; why do you go on it, at all?"

"Anan! — Why you know, gal, we go to bring off Hist, the Sarpent's betrothed — the maid he means to marry, as soon as we get back to the tribe."

"That is all right for the Indian — but you do not mean to marry Hist — you are not betrothed, and why should two risk their lives and liberties, to do that which one can just as well perform?"

"Ah — now I understand you, Judith — yes, now I begin to take the idee. You think as Hist is the Sarpent's betrothed, as they call it, and not mine, it's altogether his affair; and as one man can paddle a canoe he ought to be left to go after his gal alone! But you forget this is our ar'n'd here on the lake, and it would not tell well to forget an ar'n'd just as the pinch

came. Then, if love does count for so much with some people, particularly with young women, friendship counts for something, too, with other some. I dares to say, the Delaware can paddle a canoe by himself, and can bring off Hist by himself, and perhaps he would like that quite as well, as to have me with him; but he couldn't sarcumvent sarcumventions, or stir up an ambushment, or fight with the savages, and get his sweetheart at the same time, as well by himself as if he had a fri'nd with him to depend on, even if that fri'nd is no better than myself. No — no — Judith, you wouldn't desert one that counted on you, at such a moment, and you can't, in reason, expect me to do it."

"I fear — I believe you are right, Deerslayer, and yet I wish you were not to go! Promise me one thing, at least, and that is, not to trust yourself among the savages, or to do anything more than to save the girl. That will be enough for once, and with that you ought to be satisfied."

"Lord bless you! gal; one would think it was Hetty that's talking, and not the quick-witted and wonderful Judith Hutter! But fright makes the wise silly, and the strong weak. Yes, I've seen proofs of that, time and ag'in! Well, it's kind and softhearted in you, Judith, to feel this consarn for a fellow creatur', and I shall always say that you are kind and of true feelings, let them that envy your good looks tell as many idle stories of you as they may."

"Deerslayer!" hastily said the girl, interrupting him, though nearly choked by her own emotions; "do you believe all you hear about a poor, motherless girl? Is the foul tongue of Hurry Harry to blast my life?"

"Not it, Judith — not it. I've told Hurry it wasn't manful to backbite them he couldn't win by fair means; and that even an Indian is always tender, touching a young woman's good name."

"If I had a brother, he wouldn't dare to do it!" exclaimed Judith, with eyes flashing fire. "But, finding me without any protector but an old man, whose ears are getting to be as dull as his feelings, he has his way as he pleases!"

"Not exactly that, Judith; no, not exactly that, neither! No man, brother or stranger, would stand by and see as fair a gal as yourself hunted down, without saying a word in her behalf. Hurry's in 'arnest in wanting to make you his wife, and the little he does let out ag'in you, comes more from jealousy, like, than from any thing else. Smile on him when he awakes, and squeeze his hand only half as hard as you squeezed mine a bit ago, and my life on it, the poor fellow will forget every thing but your comeliness. Hot words don't always come from the heart, but oftener from the stomach than anywhere else. Try him, Judith, when he awakes, and see the virtue of a smile."

Deerslayer laughed, in his own manner, as he concluded, and then he intimated to the patient-looking, but really impatient Chingachgook, his readiness to proceed. As the young man entered the canoe, the girl stood immovable as stone, lost in the musings that the language and manner of the other were likely to produce. The simplicity of the hunter had completely put her at fault; for, in her narrow sphere, Judith was an expert manager of the other sex; though in the present instance she was far more actuated by impulses, in all she had said and done, than by calculation. We shall not deny that some of Judith's reflections were bitter, though the sequel of the tale must be referred to, in order to explain how merited, or how keen were her sufferings.

Chingachgook and his pale-face friend set forth on their hazardous and delicate enterprise, with a coolness and method that would have done credit to men who were on their twentieth, instead of being on their first, war-path. As suited his relation to the pretty fugitive, in whose service they were engaged, the Indian took his place in the head of the canoe; while Deerslayer guided its movements in the stern. By this arrangement, the former would be the first to land, and of course, the first to meet his mistress. The latter had taken his post without comment, but in secret influenced by the reflection that one who had so much at stake as the Indian, might not possibly guide the canoe with the same steadiness and intelligence, as another who had more command of his feelings. From the instant they left the side of the ark, the movements of the two adventurers were like the manoeuvres of highly-drilled soldiers, who, for the first time were called on to meet the enemy in the field. As yet, Chingachgook had never fired a shot in anger, and the debut of his companion in warfare is known to the reader. It is true, the Indian had been hanging about his enemy's camp for a few hours, on his first arrival, and he had even once entered it, as related in the last chapter, but no consequences had followed either experiment. Now, it was certain that an important result was to be effected, or a mortifying failure was to ensue. The rescue, or the continued captivity of Hist, depended on the enterprise. In a word, it was virtually the maiden expedition of these two ambitious young forest soldiers; and while one of them set forth impelled by sentiments that usually carry men so far, both had all their feelings of pride and manhood enlisted in their success.

Instead of steering in a direct line to the point, then distant from the ark less than a quarter of a mile, Deerslayer laid

the head of his canoe diagonally towards the centre of the lake, with a view to obtain a position from which he might approach the shore, having his enemies in his front only. The spot where Hetty had landed, and where Hist had promised to meet them, moreover, was on the upper side of the projection rather than on the lower; and to reach it would have required the two adventurers to double nearly the whole point, close in with the shore, had not this preliminary step been taken. So well was the necessity for this measure understood, that Chingachgook quietly paddled on, although it was adopted without consulting him, and apparently was taking him in a direction nearly opposite to that one might think he most wished to go. A few minutes sufficed, however, to carry the canoe the necessary distance, when both the young men ceased paddling as it were by instinctive consent, and the boat became stationary. The darkness increased rather than diminished, but it was still possible, from the place where the adventurers lay, to distinguish the outlines of the mountains. In vain did the Delaware turn his head eastward, to catch a glimpse of the promised star; for, notwithstanding the clouds broke a little near the horizon in that quarter of the heavens, the curtain continued so far drawn as effectually to conceal all behind it. In front, as was known by the formation of land above and behind it, lay the point, at the distance of about a thousand feet. No signs of the castle could be seen, nor could any movement in that quarter of the lake reach the ear. The latter circumstance might have been equally owing to the distance, which was several miles, or to the fact that nothing was in motion. As for the ark, though scarcely farther from the canoe than the point, it lay so completely buried in the shadows of the shore, that it would not have been visible even had there been many degrees more of light than actually existed.

The adventurers now held a conference in low voices, consulting together as to the probable time. Deerslayer thought it wanted yet some minutes to the rising of the star, while the impatience of the chief caused him to fancy the night further advanced, and to believe that his betrothed was already waiting his appearance on the shore. As might have been expected, the opinion of the latter prevailed, and his friend disposed himself to steer for the place of rendezvous. The utmost skill and precaution now became necessary in the management of the canoe. The paddles were lifted and returned to the water in a noiseless manner; and when within a hundred yards of the beach, Chingachgook took in his, altogether laying his hand on his rifle in its stead. As they got still more within the belt of darkness that girded the woods, it was seen that they were steering too far north, and the course was altered accordingly. The canoe now seemed to move by instinct, so cautious and deliberate were all its motions. Still it continued to advance, until its bows grated on the gravel of the beach, at the precise spot where Hetty had landed, and whence her voice had issued, the previous night, as the ark was passing. There was, as usual, a narrow strand, but bushes fringed the woods, and in most places overhung the water.

Chingachgook stepped upon the beach, and cautiously examined it for some distance on each side of the canoe. In order to do this, he was often obliged to wade to his knees in the lake, but no Hist rewarded his search. When he returned, he found his friend also on the shore. They next conferred in whispers, the Indian apprehending that they must have mistaken the place of rendezvous. But Deerslayer thought it was probable they had mistaken the hour. While he was yet speaking, he grasped the arm of the Delaware, caused him to turn his head in the direction of the lake, and pointed towards the summits of the eastern mountains. The clouds had broken a little, apparently behind rather than above the hills, and the evening star was glittering among the branches of a pine. This was every way a flattering omen, and the young men leaned on their rifles, listening intently for the sound of approaching footsteps. Voices they often heard, and mingled with them were the suppressed cries of children, and the low but sweet laugh of Indian women. As the native Americans are habitually cautious, and seldom break out in loud conversation, the adventurers knew by these facts that they must be very near the encampment. It was easy to perceive that there was a fire within the woods, by the manner in which some of the upper branches of the trees were illuminated, but it was not possible, where they stood, to ascertain exactly how near it was to themselves. Once or twice, it seemed as if stragglers from around the fire were approaching the place of rendezvous; but these sounds were either altogether illusion, or those who had drawn near returned again without coming to the shore. A quarter of an hour was passed in this state of intense expectation and anxiety, when Deerslayer proposed that they should circle the point in the canoe; and by getting a position close in, where the camp could be seen, reconnoitre the Indians, and thus enable themselves to form some plausible conjectures for the non-appearance of Hist. The Delaware, however, resolutely refused to quit the spot, reasonably enough offering as a reason the disappointment of the girl, should she arrive in his absence. Deerslayer felt for his friend's concern, and offered to make the circuit of the point by himself, leaving the latter concealed in the bushes to await the occurrence of any fortunate event that might favour his views. With this understanding, then, the parties separated.

As soon as Deerslayer was at his post again, in the stern of the canoe, he left the shore with the same precautions, and

in the same noiseless manner, as he had approached it. On this occasion he did not go far from the land, the bushes affording a sufficient cover, by keeping as close in as possible. Indeed, it would not have been easy to devise any means more favourable to reconnoitering round an Indian camp, than those afforded by the actual state of things. The formation of the point permitted the place to be circled on three of its sides, and the progress of the boat was so noiseless as to remove any apprehensions from an alarm through sound. The most practised and guarded foot might stir a bunch of leaves, or snap a dried stick in the dark, but a bark canoe could be made to float over the surface of smooth water, almost with the instinctive readiness, and certainly with the noiseless movements of an aquatic bird.

Deerslayer had got nearly in a line between the camp and the ark before he caught a glimpse of the fire. This came upon him suddenly, and a little unexpectedly, at first causing an alarm, lest he had incautiously ventured within the circle of light it cast. But perceiving at a second glance that he was certainly safe from detection, so long as the Indians kept near the centre of the illumination, he brought the canoe to a state of rest in the most favourable position he could find, and commenced his observations.

We have written much, but in vain, concerning this extraordinary being, if the reader requires now to be told, that, untutored as he was in the learning of the world, and simple as he ever showed himself to be in all matters touching the subtleties of conventional taste, he was a man of strong, native, poetical feeling. He loved the woods for their freshness, their sublime solitudes, their vastness, and the impress that they everywhere bore of the divine hand of their creator. He seldom moved through them, without pausing to dwell on some peculiar beauty that gave him pleasure, though seldom attempting to investigate the causes; and never did a day pass without his communing in spirit, and this, too, without the aid of forms or language, with the infinite source of all he saw, felt, and beheld. Thus constituted, in a moral sense, and of a steadiness that no danger could appall, or any crisis disturb, it is not surprising that the hunter felt a pleasure at looking on the scene he now beheld, that momentarily caused him to forget the object of his visit. This will more fully appear when we describe it.

The canoe lay in front of a natural vista, not only through the bushes that lined the shore, but of the trees also, that afforded a clear view of the camp. It was by means of this same opening that the light had been first seen from the ark. In consequence of their recent change of ground, the Indians had not yet retired to their huts, but had been delayed by their preparations, which included lodging as well as food. A large fire had been made, as much to answer the purpose of torches as for the use of their simple cookery; and at this precise moment it was blazing high and bright, having recently received a large supply of dried brush. The effect was to illuminate the arches of the forest, and to render the whole area occupied by the camp as light as if hundreds of tapers were burning. Most of the toil had ceased, and even the hungriest child had satisfied its appetite. In a word, the time was that moment of relaxation and general indolence which is apt to succeed a hearty meal, and when the labours of the day have ended. The hunters and the fishermen had been totally successful; and food, that one great requisite of savage life, being abundant, every other care appeared to have subsided in the sense of enjoyment dependent on this all-important fact.

Deerslayer saw at a glance that many of the warriors were absent. His acquaintance Rivenoak, however, was present, being seated in the foreground of a picture that Salvator Rosa would have delighted to draw, his swarthy features illuminated as much by pleasure as by the torchlike flame, while he showed another of the tribe one of the elephants that had caused so much sensation among his people. A boy was looking over his shoulder, in dull curiosity, completing the group. More in the background eight or ten warriors lay half recumbent on the ground, or sat with their backs reclining against trees, so many types of indolent repose. Their arms were near them all, sometimes leaning against the same trees as themselves, or were lying across their bodies in careless preparation. But the group that most attracted the attention of Deerslayer was that composed of the women and children. All the females appeared to be collected together, and, almost as a matter of course, their young were near them. The former laughed and chatted in their rebuked and quiet manner, though one who knew the habits of the people might have detected that everything was not going on in its usual train. Most of the young women seemed to be light-hearted enough; but one old hag was seated apart with a watchful soured aspect, which the hunter at once knew betokened that some duty of an unpleasant character had been assigned her by the chiefs. What that duty was, he had no means of knowing; but he felt satisfied it must be in some measure connected with her own sex, the aged among the women generally being chosen for such offices and no other.

As a matter of course, Deerslayer looked eagerly and anxiously for the form of Hist. She was nowhere visible though the light penetrated to considerable distances in all directions around the fire. Once or twice he started, as he thought he



recognized her laugh; but his ears were deceived by the soft melody that is so common to the Indian female voice. At length the old woman spoke loud and angrily, and then he caught a glimpse of one or two dark figures in the background of trees, which turned as if obedient to the rebuke, and walked more within the circle of the light. A young warrior's form first came fairly into view; then followed two youthful females, one of whom proved to be the Delaware girl. Deerslayer now comprehended it all. Hist was watched, possibly by her young companion, certainly by the old woman. The youth was probably some suitor of either her or her companion; but even his discretion was distrusted under the influence of his admiration. The known vicinity of those who might be supposed to be her friends, and the arrival of a strange red man on the lake had induced more than the usual care, and the girl had not been able to slip away from those who watched her in order to keep her appointment. Deerslayer traced her uneasiness by her attempting once or twice to look up through the branches of the trees, as if endeavouring to get glimpses of the star she had herself named as the sign for meeting. All was vain, however, and after strolling about the camp a little longer, in affected indifference, the two girls quitted their male escort, and took seats among their own sex. As soon as this was done, the old sentinel changed her place to one more agreeable to herself, a certain proof that she had hitherto been exclusively on watch.

Deerslayer now felt greatly at a loss how to proceed. He well knew that Chingachgook could never be persuaded to return to the ark without making some desperate effort for the recovery of his mistress, and his own generous feelings well disposed him to aid in such an undertaking. He thought he saw the signs of an intention among the females to retire for the night; and should he remain, and the fire continue to give out its light, he might discover the particular hut or arbour under which Hist reposed; a circumstance that would be of infinite use in their future proceedings. Should he remain, however, much longer where he was, there was great danger that the impatience of his friend would drive him into some act of imprudence. At each instant, indeed, he expected to see the swarthy form of the Delaware appearing in the background, like the tiger prowling around the fold. Taking all things into consideration, therefore, he came to the conclusion it would be better to rejoin his friend, and endeavour to temper his impetuosity by some of his own coolness and discretion. It required but a minute or two to put this plan in execution, the canoe returning to the strand some ten or fifteen minutes after it had left it.

Contrary to his expectations, perhaps, Deerslayer found the Indian at his post, from which he had not stirred, fearful that his betrothed might arrive during his absence. A conference followed, in which Chingachgook was made acquainted with the state of things in the camp. When Hist named the point as the place of meeting, it was with the expectation of making her escape from the old position, and of repairing to a spot that she expected to find without any occupants; but the sudden change of localities had disconcerted all her plans. A much greater degree of vigilance than had been previously required was now necessary; and the circumstance that an aged woman was on watch also denoted some special grounds of alarm. All these considerations, and many more that will readily suggest themselves to the reader, were briefly discussed before the young men came to any decision. The occasion, however, being one that required acts instead of words, the course to be pursued was soon chosen.

Disposing of the canoe in such a manner that Hist must see it, should she come to the place of meeting previously to their return, the young men looked to their arms and prepared to enter the wood. The whole projection into the lake contained about two acres of land; and the part that formed the point, and on which the camp was placed, did not compose a surface of more than half that size. It was principally covered with oaks, which, as is usual in the American forests, grew to a great height without throwing out a branch, and then arched in a dense and rich foliage. Beneath, except the fringe of thick bushes along the shore, there was very little underbrush; though, in consequence of their shape, the trees were closer together than is common in regions where the axe has been freely used, resembling tall, straight, rustic columns, upholding the usual canopy of leaves. The surface of the land was tolerably even, but it had a small rise near its centre, which divided it into a northern and southern half. On the latter, the Hurons had built their fire, profiting by the formation to conceal it from their enemies, who, it will be remembered, were supposed to be in the castle, which bore northerly. A brook also came brawling down the sides of the adjacent hills, and found its way into the lake on the southern side of the point. It had cut for itself a deep passage through some of the higher portions of the ground, and, in later days, when this spot has become subjected to the uses of civilization, by its windings and shaded banks, it has become no mean accessory in contributing to the beauty of the place. This brook lay west of the encampment, and its waters found their way into the great reservoir of that region on the same side, and quite near to the spot chosen for the fire. All these peculiarities, so far as circumstances allowed, had been noted by Deerslayer, and explained to his friend.

The reader will understand that the little rise in the ground, that lay behind the Indian encampment, greatly favoured the secret advance of the two adventurers. It prevented the light of the fire diffusing itself on the ground directly in the rear, although the land fell away towards the water, so as to leave what might be termed the left, or eastern flank of the position unprotected by this covering. We have said unprotected, though that is not properly the word, since the knoll behind the huts and the fire offered a cover for those who were now stealthily approaching, rather than any protection to the Indians. Deerslayer did not break through the fringe of bushes immediately abreast of the canoe, which might have brought him too suddenly within the influence of the light, since the hillock did not extend to the water; but he followed the beach northerly until he had got nearly on the opposite side of the tongue of land, which brought him under the shelter of the low acclivity, and consequently more in the shadow.

As soon as the friends emerged from the bushes, they stopped to reconnoitre. The fire was still blazing behind the little ridge, casting its light upward into the tops of the trees, producing an effect that was more pleasing than advantageous. Still the glare had its uses; for, while the background was in obscurity, the foreground was in strong light; exposing the savages and concealing their foes. Profiting by the latter circumstance, the young men advanced cautiously towards the ridge, Deerslayer in front, for he insisted on this arrangement, lest the Delaware should be led by his feelings into some indiscretion. It required but a moment to reach the foot of the little ascent, and then commenced the most critical part of the enterprise. Moving with exceeding caution, and trailing his rifle, both to keep its barrel out of view, and in readiness for service, the hunter put foot before foot, until he had got sufficiently high to overlook the summit, his own head being alone brought into the light. Chingachgook was at his side and both paused to take another close examination of the camp. In order, however, to protect themselves against any straggler in the rear, they placed their bodies against the trunk of an oak, standing on the side next the fire.

The view that Deerslayer now obtained of the camp was exactly the reverse of that he had perceived from the water. The dim figures which he had formerly discovered must have been on the summit of the ridge, a few feet in advance of the spot where he was now posted. The fire was still blazing brightly, and around it were seated on logs thirteen warriors, which accounted for all whom he had seen from the canoe. They were conversing, with much earnestness among themselves, the image of the elephant passing from hand to hand. The first burst of savage wonder had abated, and the question now under discussion was the probable existence, the history and the habits of so extraordinary an animal. We have not leisure to record the opinions of these rude men on a subject so consonant to their lives and experience; but little is hazarded in saying that they were quite as plausible, and far more ingenious, than half the conjectures that precede the demonstrations of science. However much they may have been at fault as to their conclusions and inferences, it is certain that they discussed the questions with a zealous and most undivided attention. For the time being all else was forgotten, and our adventurers could not have approached at a more fortunate instant.

The females were collected near each other, much as Deerslayer had last seen them, nearly in a line between the place where he now stood and the fire. The distance from the oak against which the young men leaned and the warriors was about thirty yards; the women may have been half that number of yards nigher. The latter, indeed, were so near as to make the utmost circumspection, as to motion and noise, indispensable. Although they conversed in their low, soft voices it was possible, in the profound stillness of the woods, even to catch passages of the discourse; and the light-hearted laugh that escaped the girls might occasionally have reached the canoe. Deerslayer felt the tremolo that passed through the frame of his friend when the latter first caught the sweet sounds that issued from the plump, pretty lips of Hist. He even laid a hand on the shoulder of the Indian, as a sort of admonition to command himself. As the conversation grew more earnest, each leaned forward to listen.

"The Hurons have more curious beasts than that," said one of the girls, contemptuously, for, like the men, they conversed of the elephant and his qualities. "The Delawares will think this creature wonderful, but tomorrow no Huron tongue will talk of it. Our young men will find him if the animals dare to come near our wigwams!"

This was, in fact, addressed to Wah-ta-Wah, though she who spoke uttered her words with an assumed diffidence and humility that prevented her looking at the other.

"The Delawares are so far from letting such creatures come into their country," returned Hist, "that no one has even seen their images there! Their young men would frighten away the images as well as the beasts."

"The Delaware young men! — the nation is women — even the deer walk when they hear their hunters coming! Who has ever heard the name of a young Delaware warrior?"

This was said in good-humour, and with a laugh; but it was also said bitinglly. That Hist so felt it, was apparent by the spirit betrayed in her answer.

“Who has ever heard the name of a young Delaware?” she repeated earnestly. “Tamenund, himself, though now as old as the pines on the hill, or as the eagles in the air, was once young; his name was heard from the great salt lake to the sweet waters of the west. What is the family of Uncas? Where is another as great, though the pale-faces have ploughed up its grates, and trodden on its bones? Do the eagles fly as high, is the deer as swift or the panther as brave? Is there no young warrior of that race? Let the Huron maidens open their eyes wider, and they may see one called Chingachgook, who is as stately as a young ash, and as tough as the hickory.”

As the girl used her figurative language and told her companions to “open their eyes, and they would see” the Delaware, Deerslayer thrust his fingers into the sides of his friend, and indulged in a fit of his hearty, benevolent laughter. The other smiled; but the language of the speaker was too flattering, and the tones of her voice too sweet for him to be led away by any accidental coincidence, however ludicrous. The speech of Hist produced a retort, and the dispute, though conducted in good-humour, and without any of the coarse violence of tone and gesture that often impairs the charms of the sex in what is called civilized life, grew warm and slightly clamorous. In the midst of this scene, the Delaware caused his friend to stoop, so as completely to conceal himself, and then he made a noise so closely resembling the little chirrup of the smallest species of the American squirrel, that Deerslayer himself, though he had heard the imitation a hundred times, actually thought it came from one of the little animals skipping about over his head. The sound is so familiar in the woods, that none of the Hurons paid it the least attention. Hist, however, instantly ceased talking, and sat motionless. Still she had sufficient self-command to abstain from turning her head. She had heard the signal by which her lover so often called her from the wigwam to the stolen interview, and it came over her senses and her heart, as the serenade affects the maiden in the land of song.

From that moment, Chingachgook felt certain that his presence was known. This was effecting much, and he could now hope for a bolder line of conduct on the part of his mistress than she might dare to adopt under an uncertainty of his situation. It left no doubt of her endeavouring to aid him in his effort to release her. Deerslayer arose as soon as the signal was given, and though he had never held that sweet communion which is known only to lovers, he was not slow to detect the great change that had come over the manner of the girl. She still affected to dispute, though it was no longer with spirit and ingenuity, but what she said was uttered more as a lure to draw her antagonists on to an easy conquest, than with any hopes of succeeding herself. Once or twice, it is true, her native readiness suggested a retort, or an argument that raised a laugh, and gave her a momentary advantage; but these little sallies, the offspring of mother-wit, served the better to conceal her real feelings, and to give to the triumph of the other party a more natural air than it might have possessed without them. At length the disputants became wearied, and they rose in a body as if about to separate. It was now that Hist, for the first time, ventured to turn her face in the direction whence the signal had come. In doing this, her movements were natural, but guarded, and she stretched her arm and yawned, as if overcome with a desire to sleep. The chirrup was again heard, and the girl felt satisfied as to the position of her lover, though the strong light in which she herself was placed, and the comparative darkness in which the adventurers stood, prevented her from seeing their heads, the only portions of their forms that appeared above the ridge at all. The tree against which they were posted had a dark shadow cast upon it by the intervention of an enormous pine that grew between it and the fire, a circumstance which alone would have rendered objects within its cloud invisible at any distance. This Deerslayer well knew, and it was one of the reasons why he had selected this particular tree.

The moment was near when it became necessary for Hist to act. She was to sleep in a small hut, or bower, that had been built near where she stood, and her companion was the aged hag already mentioned. Once within the hut, with this sleepless old woman stretched across the entrance, as was her nightly practice, the hope of escape was nearly destroyed, and she might at any moment be summoned to her bed. Luckily, at this instant one of the warriors called to the old woman by name, and bade her bring him water to drink. There was a delicious spring on the northern side of the point, and the hag took a gourd from a branch and, summoning Hist to her side, she moved towards the summit of the ridge, intending to descend and cross the point to the natural fountain. All this was seen and understood by the adventurers, and they fell back into the obscurity, concealing their persons by trees, until the two females had passed them. In walking, Hist was held tightly by the hand. As she moved by the tree that hid Chingachgook and his friend the former felt for his tomahawk, with the intention to bury it in the brain of the woman. But the other saw the hazard of such a measure, since a single scream

might bring all the warriors upon them, and he was averse to the act on considerations of humanity. His hand, therefore, prevented the blow. Still as the two moved past, the chirrup was repeated, and the Huron woman stopped and faced the tree whence the sounds seemed to proceed, standing, at the moment, within six feet of her enemies. She expressed her surprise that a squirrel should be in motion at so late an hour, and said it boded evil. Hist answered that she had heard the same squirrel three times within the last twenty minutes, and that she supposed it was waiting to obtain some of the crumbs left from the late supper. This explanation appeared satisfactory, and they moved towards the spring, the men following stealthily and closely. The gourd was filled, and the old woman was hurrying back, her hand still grasping the wrist of the girl, when she was suddenly seized so violently by the throat as to cause her to release her captive, and to prevent her making any other sound than a sort of gurgling, suffocating noise. The Serpent passed his arm round the waist of his mistress and dashed through the bushes with her, on the north side of the point. Here he immediately turned along the beach and ran towards the canoe. A more direct course could have been taken, but it might have led to a discovery of the place of embarking.

Deerslayer kept playing on the throat of the old woman like the keys of an organ, occasionally allowing her to breathe, and then compressing his fingers again nearly to strangling. The brief intervals for breath, however, were well improved, and the hag succeeded in letting out a screech or two that served to alarm the camp. The tramp of the warriors, as they sprang from the fire, was plainly audible, and at the next moment three or four of them appeared on the top of the ridge, drawn against the background of light, resembling the dim shadows of the phantasmagoria. It was now quite time for the hunter to retreat. Tripping up the heels of his captive, and giving her throat a parting squeeze, quite as much in resentment at her indomitable efforts to sound the alarm as from any policy, he left her on her back, and moved towards the bushes, his rifle at a poise, and his head over his shoulders, like a lion at bay.



## CHAPTER 17

*"There, ye wise saints, behold your light, your star,  
Ye would be dupes and victims and ye are.  
Is it enough? or, must I, while a thrill  
Lives in your sapient bosoms, cheat you still?"*

—THOMAS MOORE, LALLA ROOKH, "THE VEILED PROPHET OF KHORASSAN"

The fire, the canoe, and the spring, near which Deerslayer commenced his retreat, would have stood in the angles of a triangle of tolerably equal sides. The distance from the fire to the boat was a little less than the distance from the fire to the spring, while the distance from the spring to the boat was about equal to that between the two points first named. This, however, was in straight lines, a means of escape to which the fugitives could not resort. They were obliged to have recourse to a detour in order to get the cover of the bushes, and to follow the curvature of the beach. Under these disadvantages, then, the hunter commenced his retreat, disadvantages that he felt to be so much the greater from his knowledge of the habits of all Indians, who rarely fail in cases of sudden alarms, more especially when in the midst of cover, immediately to throw out flankers, with a view to meet their foes at all points, and if possible to turn their rear. That some such course was now adopted he believed from the tramp of feet, which not only came up the ascent, as related, but were also heard, under the first impulse, diverging not only towards the hill in the rear, but towards the extremity of the point, in a direction opposite to that he was about to take himself. Promptitude, consequently became a matter of the last importance, as the parties might meet on the strand, before the fugitive could reach the canoe.

Notwithstanding the pressing nature of the emergency, Deerslayer hesitated a single instant, ere he plunged into the bushes that lined the shore. His feelings had been awakened by the whole scene, and a sternness of purpose had come over him, to which he was ordinarily a stranger. Four dark figures loomed on the ridge, drawn against the brightness of the fire, and an enemy might have been sacrificed at a glance. The Indians had paused to gaze into the gloom, in search of the screeching hag, and with many a man less given to reflection than the hunter, the death of one of them would have been certain. Luckily he was more prudent. Although the rifle dropped a little towards the foremost of his pursuers, he did not aim or fire, but disappeared in the cover. To gain the beach, and to follow it round to the place where Chingachgook was already in the canoe, with Hist, anxiously waiting his appearance, occupied but a moment. Laying his rifle in the bottom of the canoe, Deerslayer stooped to give the latter a vigorous shove from the shore, when a powerful Indian leaped through the bushes, alighting like a panther on his back. Everything was now suspended by a hair; a false step ruining all. With a generosity that would have rendered a Roman illustrious throughout all time, but which, in the career of one so simple and humble, would have been forever lost to the world but for this unpretending legend, Deerslayer threw all his force into a desperate effort, shoved the canoe off with a power that sent it a hundred feet from the shore, as it might be in an instant, and fell forward into the lake, himself, face downward; his assailant necessarily following him.

Although the water was deep within a few yards of the beach, it was not more than breast high, as close in as the spot where the two combatants fell. Still this was quite sufficient to destroy one who had sunk, under the great disadvantages in which Deerslayer was placed. His hands were free, however, and the savage was compelled to relinquish his hug, to keep his own face above the surface. For half a minute there was a desperate struggle, like the floundering of an alligator that has just seized some powerful prey, and then both stood erect, grasping each other's arms, in order to prevent the use of the deadly knife in the darkness. What might have been the issue of this severe personal struggle cannot be known, for half a dozen savages came leaping into the water to the aid of their friend, and Deerslayer yielded himself a prisoner, with a dignity that was as remarkable as his self-devotion.

To quit the lake and lead their new captive to the fire occupied the Indians but another minute. So much engaged were they all with the struggle and its consequences, that the canoe was unseen, though it still lay so near the shore as to render every syllable that was uttered perfectly intelligible to the Delaware and his betrothed; and the whole party left the spot, some continuing the pursuit after Hist, along the beach, though most proceeded to the light. Here Deerslayer's antagonist so far recovered his breath and his recollection, for he had been throttled nearly to strangulation, as to relate the manner in which the girl had got off. It was now too late to assail the other fugitives, for no sooner was his friend led into the bushes than the Delaware placed his paddle into the water, and the light canoe glided noiselessly away, holding its course towards the centre of the lake until safe from shot, after which it sought the Ark. When Deerslayer reached the fire, he found

himself surrounded by no less than eight grim savages, among whom was his old acquaintance Rivenoak. As soon as the latter caught a glimpse of the captive's countenance, he spoke apart to his companions, and a low but general exclamation of pleasure and surprise escaped them. They knew that the conqueror of their late friend, he who had fallen on the opposite side of the lake, was in their hands, and subject to their mercy, or vengeance. There was no little admiration mingled in the ferocious looks that were thrown on the prisoner; an admiration that was as much excited by his present composure, as by his past deeds. This scene may be said to have been the commencement of the great and terrible reputation that Deerslayer, or Hawkeye, as he was afterwards called, enjoyed among all the tribes of New York and Canada; a reputation that was certainly more limited in its territorial and numerical extent, than those which are possessed in civilized life, but which was compensated for what it wanted in these particulars, perhaps, by its greater justice, and the total absence of mystification and management.

The arms of Deerslayer were not pinioned, and he was left the free use of his hands, his knife having been first removed. The only precaution that was taken to secure his person was untiring watchfulness, and a strong rope of bark that passed from ankle to ankle, not so much to prevent his walking, as to place an obstacle in the way of his attempting to escape by any sudden leap. Even this extra provision against flight was not made until the captive had been brought to the light, and his character ascertained. It was, in fact, a compliment to his prowess, and he felt proud of the distinction. That he might be bound when the warriors slept he thought probable, but to be bound in the moment of capture showed that he was already, and thus early, attaining a name. While the young Indians were fastening the rope, he wondered if Chingachgook would have been treated in the same manner, had he too fallen into the hands of the enemy. Nor did the reputation of the young pale-face rest altogether on his success in the previous combat, or in his discriminating and cool manner of managing the late negotiation, for it had received a great accession by the occurrences of the night. Ignorant of the movements of the Ark, and of the accident that had brought their fire into view, the Iroquois attributed the discovery of their new camp to the vigilance of so shrewd a foe. The manner in which he ventured upon the point, the abstraction or escape of Hist, and most of all the self-devotion of the prisoner, united to the readiness with which he had sent the canoe adrift, were so many important links in the chain of facts, on which his growing fame was founded. Many of these circumstances had been seen, some had been explained, and all were understood.

While this admiration and these honors were so unreservedly bestowed on Deerslayer, he did not escape some of the penalties of his situation. He was permitted to seat himself on the end of a log, near the fire, in order to dry his clothes, his late adversary standing opposite, now holding articles of his own scanty vestments to the heat, and now feeling his throat, on which the marks of his enemy's fingers were still quite visible. The rest of the warriors consulted together, near at hand, all those who had been out having returned to report that no signs of any other prowlers near the camp were to be found. In this state of things, the old woman, whose name was Shebear, in plain English, approached Deerslayer, with her fists clenched and her eyes flashing fire. Hitherto, she had been occupied with screaming, an employment at which she had played her part with no small degree of success, but having succeeded in effectually alarming all within reach of a pair of lungs that had been strengthened by long practice, she next turned her attention to the injuries her own person had sustained in the struggle. These were in no manner material, though they were of a nature to arouse all the fury of a woman who had long ceased to attract by means of the gentler qualities, and who was much disposed to revenge the hardships she had so long endured, as the neglected wife and mother of savages, on all who came within her power. If Deerslayer had not permanently injured her, he had temporarily caused her to suffer, and she was not a person to overlook a wrong of this nature, on account of its motive.

"Skunk of the pale-faces," commenced this exasperated and semi-poetic fury, shaking her fist under the nose of the impassable hunter, "you are not even a woman. Your friends the Delawares are only women, and you are their sheep. Your own people will not own you, and no tribe of redmen would have you in their wigwams; you skulk among petticoated warriors. You slay our brave friend who has left us? — No — his great soul scorned to fight you, and left his body rather than have the shame of slaying you! But the blood that you spilt when the spirit was not looking on, has not sunk into the ground. It must be buried in your groans. What music do I hear? Those are not the wailings of a red man! — no red warrior groans so much like a hog. They come from a pale-face throat — a Yengeese bosom, and sound as pleasant as girls singing — Dog — skunk — woodchuck-mink — hedgehog — pig — toad — spider — yengee —"

Here the old woman, having expended her breath and exhausted her epithets, was fain to pause a moment, though both her fists were shaken in the prisoner's face, and the whole of her wrinkled countenance was filled with fierce

resentment. Deerslayer looked upon these impotent attempts to arouse him as indifferently as a gentleman in our own state of society regards the vituperative terms of a blackguard: the one party feeling that the tongue of an old woman could never injure a warrior, and the other knowing that mendacity and vulgarity can only permanently affect those who resort to their use; but he was spared any further attack at present, by the interposition of Rivenoak, who shoved aside the hag, bidding her quit the spot, and prepared to take his seat at the side of his prisoner. The old woman withdrew, but the hunter well understood that he was to be the subject of all her means of annoyance, if not of positive injury, so long as he remained in the power of his enemies, for nothing rankles so deeply as the consciousness that an attempt to irritate has been met by contempt, a feeling that is usually the most passive of any that is harbored in the human breast. Rivenoak quietly took the seat we have mentioned, and, after a short pause, he commenced a dialogue, which we translate as usual, for the benefit of those readers who have not studied the North American languages.

"My pale-face friend is very welcome," said the Indian, with a familiar nod, and a smile so covert that it required all Deerslayer's vigilance to detect, and not a little of his philosophy to detect unmoved; "he is welcome. The Hurons keep a hot fire to dry the white man's clothes by."

"I thank you, Huron — or Mingo, as I most like to call you," returned the other, "I thank you for the welcome, and I thank you for the fire. Each is good in its way, and the last is very good, when one has been in a spring as cold as the Glimmerglass. Even Huron warmth may be pleasant, at such a time, to a man with a Delaware heart."

"The pale-face — but my brother has a name? So great a warrior would not have lived without a name?"

"Mingo," said the hunter, a little of the weakness of human nature exhibiting itself in the glance of his eye, and the colour on his cheek — "Mingo, your brave called me Hawkeye, I suppose on account of a quick and certain aim, when he was lying with his head in my lap, afore his spirit started for the Happy Hunting Grounds."

"Tis a good name! The hawk is sure of his blow. Hawkeye is not a woman; why does he live with the Delawares?"

"I understand you, Mingo, but we look on all that as a sarcumvention of some of your subtle devils, and deny the charge. Providence placed me among the Delawares young, and, 'bating what Christian usages demand of my colour and gifts, I hope to live and die in their tribe. Still I do not mean to throw away altogether my natyve rights, and shall strive to do a pale-face's duty, in red-skin society."

"Good; a Huron is a red-skin, as well as a Delaware. Hawkeye is more of a Huron than of a woman."

"I suppose you know, Mingo, your own meaning; if you don't I make no question 'tis well known to Satan. But if you wish to get any thing out of me, speak plainer, for bargains can not be made blindfolded, or tongue tied."

"Good; Hawkeye has not a forked tongue, and he likes to say what he thinks. He is an acquaintance of the Muskrat," this was the name by which all the Indians designated Hutter — "and has lived in his wigwam. But he is not a friend. He wants no scalps, like a miserable Indian, but fights like a stout-hearted pale-face. The Muskrat is neither white, nor red. Neither a beast nor a fish. He is a water snake; sometimes in the spring and sometimes on the land. He looks for scalps, like an outcast. Hawkeye can go back and tell him how he has outwitted the Hurons, how he has escaped, and when his eyes are in a fog, when he can't see as far as from his cabin to the shore, then Hawkeye can open the door for the Hurons. And how will the plunder be divided? Why, Hawkeye, will carry away the most, and the Hurons will take what he may choose to leave behind him. The scalps can go to Canada, for a pale-face has no satisfaction in them."

"Well, well, Rivenoak — for so I hear 'em tarm you — This is plain English, enough, though spoken in Iroquois. I understand all you mean, now, and must say it out-devils even Mingo deviltry! No doubt, 'twould be easy enough to go back and tell the Muskrat that I had got away from you, and gain some credit, too, by the expl'ite."

"Good. That is what I want the pale-face to do."

"Yes — yes — That's plain enough. I know what you want me to do, without more words. When inside the house, and eating the Muskrat's bread, and laughing and talking with his pretty darters, I might put his eyes into so thick a fog, that he couldn't even see the door, much less the land."

"Good! Hawkeye should have been born a Huron! His blood is not more than half white!"

"There you're out, Huron; yes, there you're as much out, as if you mistook a wolf for a catamount. I'm white in blood, heart, natur' and gifts, though a little red-skin in feelin's and habits. But when old Hutter's eyes are well befogged, and his pretty darters perhaps in a deep sleep, and Hurry Harry, the Great Pine as you Indians tarm him, is dreaming of any thing but mischief, and all suppose Hawkeye is acting as a faithful sentinel, all I have to do is set a torch somewhere in sight for a

signal, open the door, and let in the Hurons, to knock 'em all on the head."

"Surely my brother is mistaken. He cannot be white! He is worthy to be a great chief among the Hurons!"

"That is true enough, I dares to say, if he could do all this. Now, harkee, Huron, and for once hear a few honest words from the mouth of a plain man. I am Christian born, and them that come of such a stock, and that listen to the words that were spoken to their fathers and will be spoken to their children, until 'arth and all it holds perishes, can never lend themselves to such wickedness. Sarcumventions in war, may be, and are, lawful; but sarcumventions, and deceit, and treachery among fri'inds are fit only for the pale-face devils. I know that there are white men enough to give you this wrong idee of our natur', but such be ontrue to their blood and gifts, and ought to be, if they are not, outcasts and vagabonds. No upright pale-face could do what you wish, and to be as plain with you as I wish to be, in my judgment no upright Delaware either. With a Mingo it may be different."

The Huron listened to this rebuke with obvious disgust, but he had his ends in view, and was too wily to lose all chance of effecting them by a precipitate avowal of resentment. Affecting to smile, he seemed to listen eagerly, and he then pondered on what he had heard.

"Does Hawkeye love the Muskrat?" he abruptly demanded; "Or does he love his daughters?"

"Neither, Mingo. Old Tom is not a man to gain my love, and, as for the darters, they are comely enough to gain the liking of any young man, but there's reason ag'in any very great love for either. Hetty is a good soul, but natur' has laid a heavy hand on her mind, poor thing."

"And the Wild Rose!" exclaimed the Huron — for the fame of Judith's beauty had spread among those who could travel the wilderness, as well as the highway by means of old eagles' nests, rocks, and riven trees known to them by report and tradition, as well as among the white borderers, "And the Wild Rose; is she not sweet enough to be put in the bosom of my brother?"

Deerslayer had far too much of the innate gentleman to insinuate aught against the fair fame of one who, by nature and position was so helpless, and as he did not choose to utter an untruth, he preferred being silent. The Huron mistook the motive, and supposed that disappointed affection lay at the bottom of his reserve. Still bent on corrupting or bribing his captive, in order to obtain possession of the treasures with which his imagination filled the Castle, he persevered in his attack.

"Hawkeye is talking with a friend," he continued. "He knows that Rivenoak is a man of his word, for they have traded together, and trade opens the soul. My friend has come here on account of a little string held by a girl, that can pull the whole body of the sternest warrior?"

"You are nearer the truth, now, Huron, than you've been afore, since we began to talk. This is true. But one end of that string was not fast to my heart, nor did the Wild Rose hold the other."

"This is wonderful! Does my brother love in his head, and not in his heart? And can the Feeble Mind pull so hard against so stout a warrior?"

"There it is ag'in; sometimes right, and sometimes wrong! The string you mean is fast to the heart of a great Delaware; one of Mohican stock in fact, living among the Delawares since the dispersal of his own people, and of the family of Uncas — Chingachgook by name, or Great Serpent. He has come here, led by the string, and I've followed, or rather come afore, for I got here first, pulled by nothing stronger than fri'ndship; which is strong enough for such as are not niggardly of their feelin's, and are willing to live a little for their fellow creatur's, as well as for themselves."

"But a string has two ends — one is fast to the mind of a Mohican; and the other?"

"Why the other was here close to the fire, half an hour since. Wah-ta-Wah held it in her hand, if she didn't hold it to her heart."

"I understand what you mean, my brother," returned the Indian gravely, for the first time catching a direct clue to the adventures of the evening. "The Great Serpent, being strongest, pulled the hardest, and Hist was forced to leave us."

"I don't think there was much pulling about it," answered the other, laughing, always in his silent manner, with as much heartiness as if he were not a captive, and in danger of torture or death — "I don't think there was much pulling about it; no I don't. Lord help you, Huron! He likes the gal, and the gal likes him, and it surpassed Huron sarcumventions to keep two young people apart, where there was so strong a feelin' to bring 'em together."



“And Hawkeye and Chingachgook came into our camp on this errand, only?”

“That’s a question that’ll answer itself, Mingo! Yes, if a question could talk it would answer itself, to your perfect satisfaction. For what else should we come? And yet, it isn’t exactly so, neither; for we didn’t come into your camp at all, but only as far as that pine, there, that you see on the other side of the ridge, where we stood watching your movements, and conduct, as long as we liked. When we were ready, the Serpent gave his signal, and then all went just as it should, down to the moment when yonder vagabond leaped upon my back. Sartain; we come for that, and for no other purpose, and we got what we come for; there’s no use in pretending otherwise. Hist is off with a man who’s the next thing to her husband, and come what will to me, that’s one good thing detarmined.”

“What sign, or signal, told the young maiden that her lover was nigh?” asked the Huron with more curiosity than it was usual for him to betray.

Deerslayer laughed again, and seem’d to enjoy the success of the exploit, with as much glee as if he had not been its victim.

“Your squirrels are great gadabouts, Mingo,” he cried still laughing—“yes, they’re sartainly great gadabouts! When other folk’s squirrels are at home and asleep, yourn keep in motion among the trees, and chirrup and sing, in a way that even a Delaware gal can understand their musick! Well, there’s four legged squirrels, and there’s two legged squirrels, and give me the last, when there’s a good tight string atween two hearts. If one brings ’em together, t’other tells when to pull hardest!”

The Huron looked vexed, though he succeeded in suppressing any violent exhibition of resentment. He now quitted his prisoner and, joining the rest of the warriors, he communicated the substance of what he had learned. As in his own case, admiration was mingled with anger at the boldness and success of their enemies. Three or four of them ascended the little acclivity and gazed at the tree where it was understood the adventurers had posted themselves, and one even descended to it, and examined for foot prints around its roots, in order to make sure that the statement was true. The result confirmed the story of the captive, and they all returned to the fire with increased wonder and respect. The messenger who had arrived with some communication from the party above, while the two adventurers were watching the camp, was now despatched with some answer, and doubtless bore with him the intelligence of all that had happened.

Down to this moment, the young Indian who had been seen walking in company with Hist and another female had made no advances to any communication with Deerslayer. He had held himself aloof from his friends, even, passing near the bevy of younger women, who were clustering together, apart as usual, and conversed in low tones on the subject of the escape of their late companion. Perhaps it would be true to say that these last were pleased as well as vexed at what had just occurred. Their female sympathies were with the lovers, while their pride was bound up in the success of their own tribe. It is possible, too, that the superior personal advantages of Hist rendered her dangerous to some of the younger part of the group, and they were not sorry to find she was no longer in the way of their own ascendancy. On the whole, however, the better feeling was most prevalent, for neither the wild condition in which they lived, the clannish prejudices of tribes, nor their hard fortunes as Indian women, could entirely conquer the inextinguishable leaning of their sex to the affections. One of the girls even laughed at the disconsolate look of the swain who might fancy himself deserted, a circumstance that seemed suddenly to arouse his energies, and induce him to move towards the log, on which the prisoner was still seated, drying his clothes.

“This is Catamount!” said the Indian, striking his hand boastfully on his naked breast, as he uttered the words in a manner to show how much weight he expected them to carry.

“This is Hawkeye,” quietly returned Deerslayer, adopting the name by which he knew he would be known in future, among all the tribes of the Iroquois. “My sight is keen; is my brother’s leap long?”

“From here to the Delaware villages. Hawkeye has stolen my wife; he must bring her back, or his scalp will hang on a pole, and dry in my wigwam.”

“Hawkeye has stolen nothing, Huron. He doesn’t come of a thieving breed, nor has he thieving gifts. Your wife, as you call Wah-ta-Wah, will never be the wife of any red-skin of the Canadas; her mind is in the cabin of a Delaware, and her body has gone to find it. The catamount is actyve I know, but its legs can’t keep pace with a woman’s wishes.”

“The Serpent of the Delawares is a dog — he is a poor bull trout that keeps in the water; he is afraid to stand on the hard earth, like a brave Indian!”

"Well, well, Huron, that's pretty impudent, considering it's not an hour since the Sarpent stood within a hundred feet of you, and would have tried the toughness of your skin with a rifle bullet, when I pointed you out to him, hadn't I laid the weight of a little judgment on his hand. You may take in timorsome gals in the settlements, with your catamount whine, but the ears of a man can tell truth from ontruth."

"Hist laughs at him! She sees he is lame, and a poor hunter, and he has never been on a war path. She will take a man for a husband, and not a fish."

"How do you know that, Catamount? how do you know that?" returned Deerslayer laughing. "She has gone into the lake, you see, and maybe she prefers a trout to a mongrel cat. As for war paths, neither the Sarpent nor I have much experience, we are ready to own, but if you don't call this one, you must term it, what the gals in the settlements term it, the high road to matrimony. Take my advice, Catamount, and search for a wife among the Huron women; you'll never get one with a willing mind from among the Delawares."

Catamount's hand felt for his tomahawk, and when the fingers reached the handle they worked convulsively, as if their owner hesitated between policy and resentment. At this critical moment Rivenoak approached, and by a gesture of authority, induced the young man to retire, assuming his former position, himself, on the log at the side of Deerslayer. Here he continued silent for a little time, maintaining the grave reserve of an Indian chief.

"Hawkeye is right," the Iroquois at length began; "his sight is so strong that he can see truth in a dark night, and our eyes have been blinded. He is an owl, darkness hiding nothing from him. He ought not to strike his friends. He is right."

"I'm glad you think so, Mingo," returned the other, "for a traitor, in my judgment, is worse than a coward. I care as little for the Muskrat, as one pale-face ought to care for another, but I care too much for him to ambush him in the way you wished. In short, according to my ideas, any sarcumventions, except open-war sarcumventions, are ag'in both law, and what we whites call 'gospel', too."

"My pale-face brother is right; he is no Indian, to forget his Manitou and his colour. The Hurons know that they have a great warrior for their prisoner, and they will treat him as one. If he is to be tortured, his torments shall be such as no common man can bear; if he is to be treated as a friend, it will be the friendship of chiefs."

As the Huron uttered this extraordinary assurance of consideration, his eye furtively glanced at the countenance of his listener, in order to discover how he stood the compliment, though his gravity and apparent sincerity would have prevented any man but one practised in artifices, from detecting his motives. Deerslayer belonged to the class of the unsuspecting, and acquainted with the Indian notions of what constitutes respect, in matters connected with the treatment of captives, he felt his blood chill at the announcement, even while he maintained an aspect so steeled that his quick sighted enemy could discover in it no signs of weakness.

"God has put me in your hands, Huron," the captive at length answered, "and I suppose you will act your will on me. I shall not boast of what I can do, under torment, for I've never been tried, and no man can say till he has been; but I'll do my endivours not to disgrace the people among whom I got my training. Howsever, I wish you now to bear witness that I'm altogether of white blood, and, in a nat'ral way of white gifts too; so, should I be overcome and forget myself, I hope you'll lay the fault where it properly belongs, and in no manner put it on the Delawares, or their allies and friends the Mohicans. We're all created with more or less weakness, and I'm afeard it's a pale-face's to give in under great bodily torment, when a red-skin will sing his songs, and boast of his deeds in the very teeth of his foes."

"We shall see. Hawkeye has a good countenance, and he is tough — but why should he be tormented, when the Hurons love him? He is not born their enemy, and the death of one warrior will not cast a cloud between them forever."

"So much the better, Huron; so much the better. Still I don't wish to owe any thing to a mistake about each other's meaning. It is so much the better that you bear no malice for the loss of a warrior who fell in war, and yet it is ontrue that there is no inimity — lawful inimity I mean — atween us. So far as I have red-skin feelin's at all, I've Delaware feelin's, and I leave you to judge for yourself how far they are likely to be fri'ndly to the Mingos —"

Deerslayer ceased, for a sort of spectre stood before him, that put a stop to his words, and, indeed, caused him for a moment to doubt the fidelity of his boasted vision. Hetty Hutter was standing at the side of the fire as quietly as if she belonged to the tribe.

As the hunter and the Indian sat watching the emotions that were betrayed in each other's countenance, the girl had approached unnoticed, doubtless ascending from the beach on the southern side of the point, or that next to the spot

where the Ark had anchored, and had advanced to the fire with the fearlessness that belonged to her simplicity, and which was certainly justified by the treatment formerly received from the Indians. As soon as Rivenoak perceived the girl, she was recognised, and calling to two or three of the younger warriors, the chief sent them out to reconnoitre, lest her appearance should be the forerunner of another attack. He then motioned to Hetty to draw near.

"I hope your visit is a sign that the Serpent and Hist are in safety, Hetty," said Deerslayer, as soon as the girl had complied with the Huron's request. "I don't think you'd come ashore ag'in, on the arr'nd that brought you here afore."

"Judith told me to come this time, Deerslayer," Hetty replied, "she paddled me ashore herself, in a canoe, as soon as the Serpent had shown her Hist and told his story. How handsome Hist is tonight, Deerslayer, and how much happier she looks than when she was with the Hurons!"

"That's natur' gal; yes, that may be set down as human natur'. She's with her betrothed, and no longer fears a Mingo husband. In my judgment Judith, herself, would lose most of her beauty if she thought she was to bestow it all on a Mingo! Content is a great fortifier of good looks, and I'll warrant you, Hist is contented enough, now she is out of the hands of these miscreants, and with her chosen warrior! Did you say that Judith told you to come ashore — why should your sister do that?"

"She bid me come to see you, and to try and persuade the savages to take more elephants to let you off, but I've brought the Bible with me — that will do more than all the elephants in father's chest!"

"And your father, good little Hetty — and Hurry; did they know of your arr'nd?"

"Not they. Both are asleep, and Judith and the Serpent thought it best they should not be woke, lest they might want to come again after scalps, when Hist had told them how few warriors, and how many women and children there were in the camp. Judith would give me no peace, till I had come ashore to see what had happened to you."

"Well, that's remarkable as consarns Judith! Whey should she feel so much unsartainty about me? — Ah — I see how it is, now; yes, I see into the whole matter, now. You must understand, Hetty, that your sister is oneasy lest Harry March should wake, and come blundering here into the hands of the inimy ag'in, under some idee that, being a travelling comrade, he ought to help me in this matter! Hurry is a blunderer, I will allow, but I don't think he'd risk as much for my sake, as he would for his own."

"Judith don't care for Hurry, though Hurry cares for her," replied Hetty innocently, but quite positively.

"I've heard you say as much as that afore; yes, I've heard that from you, afore, gal, and yet it isn't true. One don't live in a tribe, not to see something of the way in which liking works in a woman's heart. Though no way given to marrying myself, I've been a looker on among the Delawares, and this is a matter in which pale-face and red-skin gifts are all as one as the same. When the feelin' begins, the young woman is thoughtful, and has no eyes or ears onless for the warrior that has taken her fancy; then follows melancholy and sighing, and such sort of actions; after which, especially if matters don't come to plain discourse, she often flies round to back biting and fault finding, blaming the youth for the very things she likes best in him. Some young creatur's are forward in this way of showing their love, and I'm of opinion Judith is one of 'em. Now, I've heard her as much as deny that Hurry was good-looking, and the young woman who could do that, must be far gone indeed!"

"The young woman who liked Hurry would own that he is handsome. I think Hurry very handsome, Deerslayer, and I'm sure everybody must think so, that has eyes. Judith don't like Harry March, and that's the reason she finds fault with him."

"Well — well — my good little Hetty, have it your own way. If we should talk from now till winter, each would think as at present, and there's no use in words. I must believe that Judith is much wrapped up in Hurry, and that, sooner or later, she'll have him; and this, too, all the more from the manner in which she abuses him; and I dare to say, you think just the contrary. But mind what I now tell you, gal, and pretend not to know it," continued this being, who was so obtuse on a point on which men are usually quick enough to make discoveries, and so acute in matters that would baffle the observation of much the greater portion of mankind, "I see how it is, with them vagabonds. Rivenoak has left us, you see, and is talking yonder with his young men, and though too far to be heard, I can see what he is telling them. Their orders is to watch your movements, and to find where the canoe is to meet you, to take you back to the Ark, and then to seize all and what they can. I'm sorry Judith sent you, for I suppose she wants you to go back ag'in."

"All that's settled, Deerslayer," returned the girl, in a low, confidential and meaning manner, "and you may trust me to

outwit the best Indian of them all. I know I am feeble minded, but I've got some sense, and you'll see how I'll use it in getting back, when my errand is done!"

"Ahs! me, poor girl; I'm afeard all that's easier said than done. They're a venomous set of riptyles and their p'ison's none the milder, for the loss of Hist. Well, I'm glad the Sarpent was the one to get off with the gal, for now there'll be two happy at least, whereas had he fallen into the hands of the Mingos, there'd been two miserable, and another far from feelin' as a man likes to feel."

"Now you put me in mind of a part of my errand that I had almost forgotten, Deerslayer. Judith told me to ask you what you thought the Hurons would do with you, if you couldn't be bought off, and what she had best do to serve you. Yes, this was the most important part of the errand — what she had best do, in order to serve you?"

"That's as you think, Hetty; but it's no matter. Young women are apt to lay most stress on what most touches their feelin's; but no matter; have it your own way, so you be but careful not to let the vagabonds get the mastery of a canoe. When you get back to the Ark, tell 'em to keep close, and to keep moving too, most especially at night. Many hours can't go by without the troops on the river hearing of this party, and then your fri'nds may look for relief. 'Tis but a day's march from the nearest garrison, and true soldiers will never lie idle with the foe in their neighborhood. This is my advice, and you may say to your father and Hurry that scalp-hunting will be a poor business now, as the Mingos are up and awake, and nothing can save 'em, 'till the troops come, except keeping a good belt of water atween 'em and the savages."

"What shall I tell Judith about you, Deerslayer; I know she will send me back again, if I don't bring her the truth about you."

"Then tell her the truth. I see no reason Judith Hutter shouldn't hear the truth about me, as well as a lie. I'm a captyve in Indian hands, and Providence only knows what will come of it! Harkee, Hetty," dropping his voice and speaking still more confidentially, "you are a little weak minded, it must be allowed, but you know something of Injins. Here I am in their hands, after having slain one of their stoutest warriors, and they've been endivouring to work upon me through fear of consequences, to betray your father, and all in the Ark. I understand the blackguards as well as if they'd told it all out plainly, with their tongues. They hold up avarice afore me, on one side, and fear on t'other, and think honesty will give way atween 'em both. But let your father and Hurry know, 'tis all useless; as for the Sarpent, he knows it already."

"But what shall I tell Judith? She will certainly send me back, if I don't satisfy her mind."

"Well, tell Judith the same. No doubt the savages will try the torments, to make me give in, and to revenge the loss of their warrior, but I must hold out ag'in nat'ral weakness in the best manner I can. You may tell Judith to feel no consarn on my account—it will come hard I know, seeing that a white man's gifts don't run to boasting and singing under torment, for he generally feels smallest when he suffers most — but you may tell her not to have any consarn. I think I shall make out to stand it, and she may rely on this, let me give in, as much as I may, and prove completely that I am white, by wailings, and howlings, and even tears, yet I'll never fall so far as to betray my fri'nds. When it gets to burning holes in the flesh, with heated ramrods, and to hacking the body, and tearing the hair out by the roots, natur' may get the upperhand, so far as groans, and complaints are consarned, but there the triumph of the vagabonds will ind; nothing short of God's abandoning him to the devils can make an honest man ontrue to his colour and duty."

Hetty listened with great attention, and her mild but speaking countenance manifested a strong sympathy in the anticipated agony of the supposititious sufferer. At first she seemed at a loss how to act; then, taking a hand of Deerslayer's she affectionately recommended to him to borrow her Bible, and to read it while the savages were inflicting their torments. When the other honestly admitted that it exceeded his power to read, she even volunteered to remain with him, and to perform this holy office in person. The offer was gently declined, and Rivenoak being about to join them, Deerslayer requested the girl to leave him, first enjoining her again to tell those in the Ark to have full confidence in his fidelity. Hetty now walked away, and approached the group of females with as much confidence and self-possession as if she were a native of the tribe. On the other hand the Huron resumed his seat by the side of his prisoner, the one continuing to ask questions with all the wily ingenuity of a practised Indian counsellor, and the other baffling him by the very means that are known to be the most efficacious in defeating the finesse of the more pretending diplomacy of civilization, or by confining his answers to the truth, and the truth only.



## CHAPTER 18

*"Thus died she; never more on her  
Shall sorrow light, or shame. She was not made  
Through years or moons the inner weight to bear,  
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid  
By age in earth; her days and pleasure were  
Brief but delightful — such as had not stayed  
Long with her destiny; but she sleeps well  
By the sea-shore whereon she loved to dwell."*

—BYRON. DON JUAN, IV, LXXI.

The young men who had been sent out to reconnoitre, on the sudden appearance of Hetty, soon returned to report their want of success in making any discovery. One of them had even been along the beach as far as the spot opposite to the ark, but the darkness had completely concealed that vessel from his notice. Others had examined in different directions, and everywhere the stillness of night was added to the silence and solitude of the woods.

It was consequently believed that the girl had come alone, as on her former visit, and on some similar errand. The Iroquois were ignorant that the ark had left the castle, and there were movements projected, if not in the course of actual execution, by this time, which also greatly added to the sense of security. A watch was set, therefore, and all but the sentinels disposed themselves to sleep. Sufficient care was had to the safe keeping of the captive, without inflicting on him any unnecessary suffering; and, as for Hetty, she was permitted to find a place among the Indian girls in the best manner she could. She did not find the friendly offices of Hist, though her character not only bestowed impunity from pain and captivity, but it procured for her a consideration and an attention that placed her, on the score of comfort, quite on a level with the wild but gentle beings around her. She was supplied with a skin, and made her own bed on a pile of boughs a little apart from the huts. Here she was soon in a profound sleep, like all around her.

There were now thirteen men in the party, and three kept watch at a time. One remained in shadow, not far from the fire, however. His duty was to guard the captive, to take care that the fire neither blazed up so as to illuminate the spot, nor yet became wholly extinguished, and to keep an eye generally on the state of the camp. Another passed from one beach to the other, crossing the base of the point, while the third kept moving slowly around the strand on its outer extremity, to prevent a repetition of the surprise that had already taken place that night. This arrangement was far from being usual among savages, who ordinarily rely more on the secrecy of their movements, than on vigilance of this nature; but it had been called for by the peculiarity of the circumstances in which the Hurons were now placed. Their position was known to their foes, and it could not easily be changed at an hour which demanded rest. Perhaps, too, they placed most of their confidence on the knowledge of what they believed to be passing higher up the lake, and which, it was thought, would fully occupy the whole of the pale-faces who were at liberty, with their solitary Indian ally. It was also probable Rivenoak was aware that, in holding his captive, he had in his own hands the most dangerous of all his enemies.

The precision with which those accustomed to watchfulness, or lives of disturbed rest, sleep, is not the least of the phenomena of our mysterious being. The head is no sooner on the pillow than consciousness is lost; and yet, at a necessary hour, the mind appears to arouse the body, as promptly as if it had stood sentinel the while over it. There can be no doubt that they who are thus roused awake by the influence of thought over matter, though the mode in which this influence is exercised must remain hidden from our curiosity until it shall be explained, should that hour ever arrive, by the entire enlightenment of the soul on the subject of all human mysteries. Thus it was with Hetty Hutter. Feeble as the immaterial portion of her existence was thought to be, it was sufficiently active to cause her to open her eyes at midnight. At that hour she awoke, and leaving her bed of skin and boughs she walked innocently and openly to the embers of the fire, stirring the latter, as the coolness of the night and the woods, in connection with an exceedingly unsophisticated bed, had a little chilled her. As the flame shot up, it lighted the swarthy countenance of the Huron on watch, whose dark eyes glistened under its light like the balls of the panther that is pursued to his den with burning brands. But Hetty felt no fear, and she approached the spot where the Indian stood. Her movements were so natural, and so perfectly devoid of any of the stealthiness of cunning or deception, that he imagined she had merely arisen on account of the coolness of the night, a common occurrence in a bivouac, and the one of all others, perhaps, the least likely to excite suspicion. Hetty spoke to him, but he understood no English. She then gazed near a minute at the sleeping captive, and moved slowly away in a sad and

melancholy manner. The girl took no pains to conceal her movements. Any ingenious expedient of this nature quite likely exceeded her powers; still her step was habitually light, and scarcely audible. As she took the direction of the extremity of the point, or the place where she had landed in the first adventure, and where Hist had embarked, the sentinel saw her light form gradually disappear in the gloom without uneasiness or changing his own position. He knew that others were on the look-out, and he did not believe that one who had twice come into the camp voluntarily, and had already left it openly, would take refuge in flight. In short, the conduct of the girl excited no more attention than that of any person of feeble intellect would excite in civilized society, while her person met with more consideration and respect.

Hetty certainly had no very distinct notions of the localities, but she found her way to the beach, which she reached on the same side of the point as that on which the camp had been made. By following the margin of the water, taking a northern direction, she soon encountered the Indian who paced the strand as sentinel. This was a young warrior, and when he heard her light tread coming along the gravel he approached swiftly, though with anything but menace in his manner. The darkness was so intense that it was not easy to discover forms within the shadows of the woods at the distance of twenty feet, and quite impossible to distinguish persons until near enough to touch them. The young Huron manifested disappointment when he found whom he had met; for, truth to say, he was expecting his favourite, who had promised to relieve the ennui of a midnight watch with her presence. This man was also ignorant of English, but he was at no loss to understand why the girl should be up at that hour. Such things were usual in an Indian village and camp, where sleep is as irregular as the meals. Then poor Hetty's known imbecility, as in most things connected with the savages, stood her friend on this occasion. Vexed at his disappointment, and impatient of the presence of one he thought an intruder, the young warrior signed for the girl to move forward, holding the direction of the beach. Hetty complied; but as she walked away she spoke aloud in English in her usual soft tones, which the stillness of the night made audible at some little distance.

"If you took me for a Huron girl, warrior," she said, "I don't wonder you are so little pleased. I am Hetty Hutter, Thomas Hutter's daughter, and have never met any man at night, for mother always said it was wrong, and modest young women should never do it; modest young women of the pale-faces, I mean; for customs are different in different parts of the world, I know. No, no; I'm Hetty Hutter, and wouldn't meet even Hurry Harry, though he should fall down on his knees and ask me! Mother said it was wrong."

By the time Hetty had said this, she reached the place where the canoes had come ashore, and, owing to the curvature of the land and the bushes, would have been completely hid from the sight of the sentinel, had it been broad day. But another footstep had caught the lover's ear, and he was already nearly beyond the sound of the girl's silvery voice. Still Hetty, bent only on her own thoughts and purposes, continued to speak, though the gentleness of her tones prevented the sounds from penetrating far into the woods. On the water they were more widely diffused.

"Here I am, Judith," she added, "and there is no one near me. The Huron on watch has gone to meet his sweetheart, who is an Indian girl you know, and never had a Christian mother to tell her how wrong it is to meet a man at night."

Hetty's voice was hushed by a "Hist!" that came from the water, and then she caught a dim view of the canoe, which approached noiselessly, and soon grated on the shingle with its bow. The moment the weight of Hetty was felt in the light craft the canoe withdrew, stern foremost, as if possessed of life and volition, until it was a hundred yards from the shore. Then it turned and, making a wide sweep, as much to prolong the passage as to get beyond the sound of voices, it held its way towards the ark. For several minutes nothing was uttered; but, believing herself to be in a favourable position to confer with her sister, Judith, who alone sat in the stern, managing the canoe with a skill little short of that of a man, began a discourse which she had been burning to commence ever since they had quitted the point.

"Here we are safe, Hetty," she said, "and may talk without the fear of being overheard. You must speak low, however, for sounds are heard far on the water in a still night. I was so close to the point some of the time while you were on it, that I have heard the voices of the warriors, and I heard your shoes on the gravel of the beach, even before you spoke."

"I don't believe, Judith, the Hurons know I have left them."

"Quite likely they do not, for a lover makes a poor sentry, unless it be to watch for his sweetheart! But tell me, Hetty, did you see and speak with Deerslayer?"

"Oh, yes — there he was seated near the fire, with his legs tied, though they left his arms free, to move them as he pleased."

"Well, what did he tell you, child? Speak quick; I am dying to know what message he sent me."

"What did he tell me? why, what do you think, Judith; he told me that he couldn't read! Only think of that! a white man, and not know how to read his Bible even! He never could have had a mother, sister!"

"Never mind that, Hetty. All men can't read; though mother knew so much and taught us so much, father knows very little about books, and he can barely read the Bible you know."

"Oh! I never thought fathers could read much, but mothers ought all to read, else how can they teach their children? Depend on it, Judith, Deerslayer could never have had a mother, else he would know how to read."

"Did you tell him I sent you ashore, Hetty, and how much concern I feel for his misfortune?" asked the other, impatiently.

"I believe I did, Judith; but you know I am feeble-minded, and I may have forgotten. I did tell him you brought me ashore. And he told me a great deal that I was to say to you, which I remember well, for it made my blood run cold to hear him. He told me to say that his friends — I suppose you are one of them, sister?"

"How can you torment me thus, Hetty! Certainly, I am one of the truest friends he has on earth."

"Torment you! yes, now I remember all about it. I am glad you used that word, Judith, for it brings it all back to my mind. Well, he said he might be tormented by the savages, but he would try to bear it as becomes a Christian white man, and that no one need be afraid — why does Deerslayer call it afraid, when mother always taught us to say afraid?"

"Never mind, dear Hetty, never mind that, now," cried the other, almost gasping for breath. "Did Deerslayer really tell you that he thought the savages would put him to the torture? Recollect now, well, Hetty, for this is a most awful and serious thing."

"Yes he did; and I remember it by your speaking about my tormenting you. Oh! I felt very sorry for him, and Deerslayer took all so quietly and without noise! Deerslayer is not as handsome as Hurry Harry, Judith, but he is more quiet."

"He's worth a million Hurrys! yes, he's worth all the young men who ever came upon the lake put together," said Judith, with an energy and positiveness that caused her sister to wonder. "He is true. There is no lie about Deerslayer. You, Hetty, may not know what a merit it is in a man to have truth, but when you get — no — I hope you will never know it. Why should one like you be ever made to learn the hard lesson to distrust and hate!"

Judith bowed her face, dark as it was, and unseen as she must have been by any eye but that of Omniscience, between her hands, and groaned. This sudden paroxysm of feeling, however, lasted but for a moment, and she continued more calmly, still speaking frankly to her sister, whose intelligence, and whose discretion in any thing that related to herself, she did not in the least distrust. Her voice, however, was low and husky, instead of having its former clearness and animation.

"It is a hard thing to fear truth, Hetty," she said, "and yet do I more dread Deerslayer's truth, than any enemy! One cannot tamper with such truth — so much honesty — such obstinate uprightness! But we are not altogether unequal, sister — Deerslayer and I? He is not altogether my superior?"

It was not usual for Judith so far to demean herself as to appeal to Hetty's judgment. Nor did she often address her by the title of sister, a distinction that is commonly given by the junior to the senior, even where there is perfect equality in all other respects. As trifling departures from habitual deportment oftener strike the imagination than more important changes, Hetty perceived the circumstances, and wondered at them in her own simple way. Her ambition was a little quickened, and the answer was as much out of the usual course of things as the question; the poor girl attempting to refine beyond her strength.

"Superior, Judith!" she repeated with pride. "In what can Deerslayer be your superior? Are you not mother's child — and does he know how to read — and wasn't mother before any woman in all this part of the world? I should think, so far from supposing himself your superior, he would hardly believe himself mine. You are handsome, and he is ugly —"

"No, not ugly, Hetty," interrupted Judith. "Only plain. But his honest face has a look in it that is far better than beauty. In my eyes, Deerslayer is handsomer than Hurry Harry."

"Judith Hutter! you frighten me. Hurry is the handsomest mortal in the world — even handsomer than you are yourself; because a man's good looks, you know, are always better than a woman's good looks."

This little innocent touch of natural taste did not please the elder sister at the moment, and she did not scruple to betray it. "Hetty, you now speak foolishly, and had better say no more on this subject," she answered. "Hurry is not the

handsomest mortal in the world, by many; and there are officers in the garrisons —” Judith stammered at the words — “there are officers in the garrisons, near us, far comelier than he. But why do you think me the equal of Deerslayer — speak of that, for I do not like to hear you show so much admiration of a man like Hurry Harry, who has neither feelings, manners, nor conscience. You are too good for him, and he ought to be told it, at once.”

“I! Judith, how you forget! Why I am not beautiful, and am feeble-minded.”

“You are good, Hetty, and that is more than can be said of Harry March. He may have a face, and a body, but he has no heart. But enough of this, for the present. Tell me what raises me to an equality with Deerslayer.”

“To think of you asking me this, Judith! He can’t read, and you can. He don’t know how to talk, but speaks worse than Hurry even; — for, sister, Harry doesn’t always pronounce his words right! Did you ever notice that?”

“Certainly, he is as coarse in speech as in everything else. But I fear you flatter me, Hetty, when you think I can be justly called the equal of a man like Deerslayer. It is true, I have been better taught; in one sense am more comely; and perhaps might look higher; but then his truth — his truth — makes a fearful difference between us! Well, I will talk no more of this; and we will bethink us of the means of getting him out of the hands of the Hurons. We have father’s chest in the ark, Hetty, and might try the temptation of more elephants; though I fear such baubles will not buy the liberty of a man like Deerslayer. I am afraid father and Hurry will not be as willing to ransom Deerslayer, as Deerslayer was to ransom them!”

“Why not, Judith? Hurry and Deerslayer are friends, and friends should always help one another.”

“Alas! poor Hetty, you little know mankind! Seeming friends are often more to be dreaded than open enemies; particularly by females. But you’ll have to land in the morning, and try again what can be done for Deerslayer. Tortured he shall not be, while Judith Hutter lives, and can find means to prevent it.”

The conversation now grew desultory, and was drawn out, until the elder sister had extracted from the younger every fact that the feeble faculties of the latter permitted her to retain, and to communicate. When Judith was satisfied — though she could never be said to be satisfied, whose feelings seemed to be so interwoven with all that related to the subject, as to have excited a nearly inappeasable curiosity — but, when Judith could think of no more questions to ask, without resorting to repetition, the canoe was paddled towards the scow. The intense darkness of the night, and the deep shadows which the hills and forest cast upon the water, rendered it difficult to find the vessel, anchored, as it had been, as close to the shore as a regard to safety rendered prudent. Judith was expert in the management of a bark canoe, the lightness of which demanded skill rather than strength; and she forced her own little vessel swiftly over the water, the moment she had ended her conference with Hetty, and had come to the determination to return. Still no ark was seen. Several times the sisters fancied they saw it, looming up in the obscurity, like a low black rock; but on each occasion it was found to be either an optical illusion, or some swell of the foliage on the shore. After a search that lasted half an hour, the girls were forced to the unwelcome conviction that the ark had departed. Most young women would have felt the awkwardness of their situation, in a physical sense, under the circumstances in which the sisters were left, more than any apprehensions of a different nature. Not so with Judith, however; and even Hetty felt more concern about the motives that might have influenced her father and Hurry, than any fears for her own safety.

“It cannot be, Hetty,” said Judith, when a thorough search had satisfied them both that no ark was to be found; “it cannot be that the Indians have rafted, or swum off and surprised our friends as they slept?”

“I don’t believe that Hist and Chingachgook would sleep until they had told each other all they had to say after so long a separation — do you, sister?”

“Perhaps not, child. There was much to keep them awake, but one Indian may have been surprised even when not asleep, especially as his thoughts may have been on other things. Still we should have heard a noise; for in a night like this, an oath of Hurry Harry’s would have echoed in the eastern hills like a clap of thunder.”

“Hurry is sinful and thoughtless about his words, Judith,” Hetty meekly and sorrowfully answered.

“No — no; ’tis impossible the ark could be taken and I not hear the noise. It is not an hour since I left it, and the whole time I have been attentive to the smallest sound. And yet, it is not easy to believe a father would willingly abandon his children!”

“Perhaps father has thought us in our cabin asleep, Judith, and has moved away to go home. You know we often move the ark in the night.”



"This is true, Hetty, and it must be as you suppose. There is a little more southern air than there was, and they have gone up the lake —" Judith stopped, for, as the last word was on her tongue, the scene was suddenly lighted, though only for a single instant, by a flash. The crack of a rifle succeeded, and then followed the roll of the echo along the eastern mountains. Almost at the same moment a piercing female cry rose in the air in a prolonged shriek. The awful stillness that succeeded was, if possible, more appalling than the fierce and sudden interruption of the deep silence of midnight. Resolute as she was both by nature and habit, Judith scarce breathed, while poor Hetty hid her face and trembled.

"That was a woman's cry, Hetty," said the former solemnly, "and it was a cry of anguish! If the ark has moved from this spot it can only have gone north with this air, and the gun and shriek came from the point. Can any thing have befallen Hist?"

"Let us go and see, Judith; she may want our assistance — for, besides herself, there are none but men in the ark."

It was not a moment for hesitation, and ere Judith had ceased speaking her paddle was in the water. The distance to the point, in a direct line, was not great, and the impulses under which the girls worked were too exciting to allow them to waste the precious moments in useless precautions. They paddled incautiously for them, but the same excitement kept others from noting their movements. Presently a glare of light caught the eye of Judith through an opening in the bushes, and steering by it, she so directed the canoe as to keep it visible, while she got as near the land as was either prudent or necessary.

The scene that was now presented to the observation of the girls was within the woods, on the side of the declivity so often mentioned, and in plain view from the boat. Here all in the camp were collected, some six or eight carrying torches of fat-pine, which cast a strong but funereal light on all beneath the arches of the forest. With her back supported against a tree, and sustained on one side by the young sentinel whose remissness had suffered Hetty to escape, sat the female whose expected visit had produced his delinquency. By the glare of the torch that was held near her face, it was evident that she was in the agonies of death, while the blood that trickled from her bared bosom betrayed the nature of the injury she had received. The pungent, peculiar smell of gunpowder, too, was still quite perceptible in the heavy, damp night air. There could be no question that she had been shot. Judith understood it all at a glance. The streak of light had appeared on the water a short distance from the point, and either the rifle had been discharged from a canoe hovering near the land, or it had been fired from the ark in passing. An incautious exclamation, or laugh, may have produced the assault, for it was barely possible that the aim had been assisted by any other agent than sound. As to the effect, that was soon still more apparent, the head of the victim dropping, and the body sinking in death. Then all the torches but one were extinguished — a measure of prudence; and the melancholy train that bore the body to the camp was just to be distinguished by the glimmering light that remained. Judith sighed heavily and shuddered, as her paddle again dipped, and the canoe moved cautiously around the point. A sight had afflicted her senses, and now haunted her imagination, that was still harder to be borne, than even the untimely fate and passing agony of the deceased girl.

She had seen, under the strong glare of all the torches, the erect form of Deerslayer, standing with commiseration, and as she thought, with shame depicted on his countenance, near the dying female. He betrayed neither fear nor backwardness himself; but it was apparent by the glances cast at him by the warriors, that fierce passions were struggling in their bosoms. All this seemed to be unheeded by the captive, but it remained impressed on the memory of Judith throughout the night. No canoe was met hovering near the point. A stillness and darkness, as complete as if the silence of the forest had never been disturbed, or the sun had never shone on that retired region, now reigned on the point, and on the gloomy water, the slumbering woods, and even the murky sky. No more could be done, therefore, than to seek a place of safety; and this was only to be found in the centre of the lake. Paddling in silence to that spot, the canoe was suffered to drift northerly, while the girls sought such repose as their situation and feelings would permit.



## CHAPTER 19

*"Stand to your arms, and guard the door — all's lost  
Unless that fearful bell be silenced soon.  
The officer hath miss'd his path, or purpose,  
Or met some unforeseen and hideous obstacle.  
Anselmo, with thy company proceed  
Straight to the tower; the rest remain with me."*

—BYRON, MARINO FALIERO, LV.II.230-35.

The conjecture of Judith Hutter, concerning the manner in which the Indian girl had met her death, was accurate in the main. After sleeping several hours, her father and March awoke. This occurred a few minutes after she had left the Ark to go in quest of her sister, and when of course Chingachgook and his betrothed were on board. From the Delaware the old man learned the position of the camp, and the recent events, as well as the absence of his daughters. The latter gave him no concern, for he relied greatly on the sagacity of the elder, and the known impunity with which the younger passed among the savages. Long familiarity with danger, too, had blunted his sensibilities. Nor did he seem much to regret the captivity of Deerslayer, for, while he knew how material his aid might be in a defence, the difference in their views on the morality of the woods, had not left much sympathy between them. He would have rejoiced to know the position of the camp before it had been alarmed by the escape of Hist, but it would be too hazardous now to venture to land, and he reluctantly relinquished for the night the ruthless designs that cupidity and revenge had excited him to entertain. In this mood Hutter took a seat in the head of the scow, where he was quickly joined by Hurry, leaving the Serpent and Hist in quiet possession of the other extremity of the vessel.

"Deerslayer has shown himself a boy, in going among the savages at this hour, and letting himself fall into their hands like a deer that tumbles into a pit," growled the old man, perceiving as usual the mote in his neighbor's eyes, while he overlooked the beam in his own; "if he is left to pay for his stupidity with his own flesh, he can blame no one but himself."

"That's the way of the world, old Tom," returned Hurry. "Every man must meet his own debts, and answer for his own sins. I'm amazed, however, that a lad as skilful and watchful as Deerslayer should have been caught in such a trap! Didn't he know any better than to go prowling about a Huron camp at midnight, with no place to retreat to but a lake? or did he think himself a buck, that by taking to the water could throw off the scent and swim himself out of difficulty? I had a better opinion of the boy's judgment, I'll own; but we must overlook a little ignorance in a raw hand. I say, Master Hutter, do you happen to know what has become of the gals — I see no signs of Judith, or Hetty, though I've been through the Ark, and looked into all its living creatur's."

Hutter briefly explained the manner in which his daughters had taken to the canoe, as it had been related by the Delaware, as well as the return of Judith after landing her sister, and her second departure.

"This comes of a smooth tongue, Floating Tom," exclaimed Hurry, grating his teeth in pure resentment — "This comes of a smooth tongue, and a silly gal's inclinations, and you had best look into the matter! You and I were both prisoners —" Hurry could recall that circumstance now — "you and I were both prisoners and yet Judith never stirred an inch to do us any sarvice! She is bewitched with this lank-looking Deerslayer, and he, and she, and you, and all of us, had best look to it. I am not a man to put up with such a wrong quietly, and I say, all the parties had best look to it! Let's up kedge, old fellow, and move nearer to this p'int, and see how matters are getting on."

Hutter had no objections to this movement, and the Ark was got under way in the usual manner; care being taken to make no noise. The wind was passing northward, and the sail soon swept the scow so far up the lake as to render the dark outlines of the trees that clothed the point dimly visible. Floating Tom steered, and he sailed along as near the land as the depth of the water and the overhanging branches would allow. It was impossible to distinguish anything that stood within the shadows of the shore, but the forms of the sail and of the hut were discerned by the young sentinel on the beach, who has already been mentioned. In the moment of sudden surprise, a deep Indian exclamation escaped him. In that spirit of recklessness and ferocity that formed the essence of Hurry's character, this man dropped his rifle and fired. The ball was sped by accident, or by that overruling providence which decides the fates of all, and the girl fell. Then followed the scene with the torches, which has just been described.

At the precise moment when Hurry committed this act of unthinking cruelty, the canoe of Judith was within a

hundred feet of the spot from which the Ark had so lately moved. Her own course has been described, and it has now become our office to follow that of her father and his companions. The shriek announced the effects of the random shot of March, and it also proclaimed that the victim was a woman. Hurry himself was startled at these unlooked for consequences, and for a moment he was sorely disturbed by conflicting sensations. At first he laughed, in reckless and rude-minded exultation; and then conscience, that monitor planted in our breasts by God, and which receives its more general growth from the training bestowed in the tillage of childhood, shot a pang to his heart. For a minute, the mind of this creature equally of civilization and of barbarism, was a sort of chaos as to feeling, not knowing what to think of its own act; and then the obstinacy and pride of one of his habits, interposed to assert their usual ascendancy. He struck the butt of his rifle on the bottom of the scow, with a species of defiance, and began to whistle a low air with an affectation of indifference. All this time the Ark was in motion, and it was already opening the bay above the point, and was consequently quitting the land.

Hurry's companions did not view his conduct with the same indulgence as that with which he appeared disposed to regard it himself. Hutter growled out his dissatisfaction, for the act led to no advantage, while it threatened to render the warfare more vindictive than ever, and none censure motiveless departures from the right more severely than the mercenary and unprincipled. Still he commanded himself, the captivity of Deerslayer rendering the arm of the offender of double consequence to him at that moment. Chingachgook arose, and for a single instant the ancient animosity of tribes was forgotten, in a feeling of colour; but he recollected himself in season to prevent any of the fierce consequences that, for a passing moment, he certainly meditated. Not so with Hist. Rushing through the hut, or cabin, the girl stood at the side of Hurry, almost as soon as his rifle touched the bottom of the scow, and with a fearlessness that did credit to her heart, she poured out her reproaches with the generous warmth of a woman.

"What for you shoot?" she said. "What Huron gal do, dat you kill him? What you t'ink Manitou say? What you t'ink Manitou feel? What Iroquois do? No get honour — no get camp — no get prisoner — no get battle — no get scalp — no get not'ing at all! Blood come after blood! How you feel, your wife killed? Who pity you, when tear come for moder, or sister? You big as great pine — Huron gal little slender birch — why you fall on her and crush her? You t'ink Huron forget it? No; red-skin never forget! Never forget friend; never forget enemy. Red man Manitou in dat. Why you so wicked, great pale-face?"

Hurry had never been so daunted as by this close and warm attack of the Indian girl. It is true that she had a powerful ally in his conscience, and while she spoke earnestly, it was in tones so feminine as to deprive him of any pretext for unmanly anger. The softness of her voice added to the weight of her remonstrance, by lending to the latter an air of purity and truth. Like most vulgar minded men, he had only regarded the Indians through the medium of their coarser and fiercer characteristics. It had never struck him that the affections are human, that even high principles — modified by habits and prejudices, but not the less elevated within their circle — can exist in the savage state, and that the warrior who is most ruthless in the field, can submit to the softest and gentlest influences in the moments of domestic quiet. In a word, it was the habit of his mind to regard all Indians as being only a slight degree removed from the wild beasts that roamed the woods, and to feel disposed to treat them accordingly, whenever interest or caprice supplied a motive or an impulse. Still, though daunted by these reproaches, the handsome barbarian could hardly be said to be penitent. He was too much rebuked by conscience to suffer an outbreak of temper to escape him, and perhaps he felt that he had already committed an act that might justly bring his manhood in question. Instead of resenting, or answering the simple but natural appeal of Hist, he walked away, like one who disdained entering into a controversy with a woman.

In the mean while the Ark swept onward, and by the time the scene with the torches was enacting beneath the trees, it had reached the open lake, Floating Tom causing it to sheer further from the land with a sort of instinctive dread of retaliation. An hour now passed in gloomy silence, no one appearing disposed to break it. Hist had retired to her pallet, and Chingachgook lay sleeping in the forward part of the scow. Hutter and Hurry alone remained awake, the former at the steering oar, while the latter brooded over his own conduct, with the stubbornness of one little given to a confession of his errors, and the secret goadings of the worm that never dies. This was at the moment when Judith and Hetty reached the centre of the lake, and had lain down to endeavor to sleep in their drifting canoe.

The night was calm, though so much obscured by clouds. The season was not one of storms, and those which did occur in the month of June, on that embedded water, though frequently violent were always of short continuance. Nevertheless, there was the usual current of heavy, damp night air, which, passing over the summits of the trees, scarcely appeared to

descend as low as the surface of the glassy lake, but kept moving a short distance above it, saturated with the humidity that constantly arose from the woods, and apparently never proceeding far in any one direction. The currents were influenced by the formation of the hills, as a matter of course, a circumstance that rendered even fresh breezes baffling, and which reduced the feeble efforts of the night air to be a sort of capricious and fickle sighings of the woods. Several times the head of the Ark pointed east, and once it was actually turned towards the south, again; but, on the whole, it worked its way north; Hutter making always a fair wind, if wind it could be called, his principal motive appearing to keep in motion, in order to defeat any treacherous design of his enemies. He now felt some little concern about his daughters, and perhaps as much about the canoe; but, on the whole, this uncertainty did not much disturb him, as he had the reliance already mentioned on the intelligence of Judith.

It was the season of the shortest nights, and it was not long before the deep obscurity which precedes the day began to yield to the returning light. If any earthly scene could be presented to the senses of man that might soothe his passions and temper his ferocity, it was that which grew upon the eyes of Hutter and Hurry as the hours advanced, changing night to morning. There were the usual soft tints of the sky, in which neither the gloom of darkness nor the brilliancy of the sun prevails, and under which objects appear more unearthly, and we might add holy, than at any other portion of the twenty four hours. The beautiful and soothing calm of eventide has been extolled by a thousand poets, and yet it does not bring with it the far-reaching and sublime thoughts of the half hour that precedes the rising of a summer sun. In the one case the panorama is gradually hid from the sight, while in the other its objects start out from the unfolding picture, first dim and misty; then marked in, in solemn background; next seen in the witchery of an increasing, a thing as different as possible from the decreasing twilight, and finally mellow, distinct and luminous, as the rays of the great centre of light diffuse themselves in the atmosphere. The hymns of birds, too, have no moral counterpart in the retreat to the roost, or the flight to the nest, and these invariably accompany the advent of the day, until the appearance of the sun itself —

“Bathes in deep joy, the land and sea.”

All this, however, Hutter and Hurry witnessed without experiencing any of that calm delight which the spectacle is wont to bring, when the thoughts are just and the aspirations pure. They not only witnessed it, but they witnessed it under circumstances that had a tendency to increase its power, and to heighten its charms. Only one solitary object became visible in the returning light that had received its form or uses from human taste or human desires, which as often deform as beautify a landscape. This was the castle, all the rest being native, and fresh from the hand of God. That singular residence, too, was in keeping with the natural objects of the view, starting out from the gloom, quaint, picturesque and ornamental. Nevertheless the whole was lost on the observers, who knew no feeling of poetry, had lost their sense of natural devotion in lives of obdurate and narrow selfishness, and had little other sympathy with nature, than that which originated with her lowest wants.

As soon as the light was sufficiently strong to allow of a distinct view of the lake, and more particularly of its shores, Hutter turned the head of the Ark directly towards the castle, with the avowed intention of taking possession, for the day at least, as the place most favorable for meeting his daughters and for carrying on his operations against the Indians. By this time, Chingachgook was up, and Hist was heard stirring among the furniture of the kitchen. The place for which they steered was distant only a mile, and the air was sufficiently favorable to permit it to be reached by means of the sail. At this moment, too, to render the appearances generally auspicious, the canoe of Judith was seen floating northward in the broadest part of the lake; having actually passed the scow in the darkness, in obedience to no other power than that of the elements. Hutter got his glass, and took a long and anxious survey, to ascertain if his daughters were in the light craft or not, and a slight exclamation like that of joy escaped him, as he caught a glimpse of what he rightly conceived to be a part of Judith's dress above the top of the canoe. At the next instant the girl arose and was seen gazing about her, like one assuring herself of her situation. A minute later, Hetty was seen on her knees in the other end of the canoe, repeating the prayers that had been taught her in childhood by a misguided but repentant mother. As Hutter laid down the glass, still drawn to its focus, the Serpent raised it to his eye and turned it towards the canoe. It was the first time he had ever used such an instrument, and Hist understood by his “Hugh!,” the expression of his face, and his entire mien, that something wonderful had excited his admiration. It is well known that the American Indians, more particularly those of superior characters and stations, singularly maintain their self-possession and stoicism, in the midst of the flood of marvels that present themselves in their occasional visits to the abodes of civilization, and Chingachgook had imbibed enough of this impassibility to suppress any very undignified manifestation of surprise. With Hist, however, no such law was binding, and

when her lover managed to bring the glass in a line with the canoe, and her eye was applied to the smaller end, the girl started back in alarm; then she clapped her hands with delight, and a laugh, the usual attendant of untutored admiration, followed. A few minutes sufficed to enable this quick witted girl to manage the instrument for herself, and she directed it at every prominent object that struck her fancy. Finding a rest in one of the windows, she and the Delaware first surveyed the lake; then the shores, the hills, and, finally, the castle attracted their attention. After a long steady gaze at the latter, Hist took away her eye, and spoke to her lover in a low, earnest manner. Chingachgook immediately placed his eye to the glass, and his look even exceeded that of his betrothed in length and intensity. Again they spoke together, confidentially, appearing to compare opinions, after which the glass was laid aside, and the young warrior quitted the cabin to join Hutter and Hurry.

The Ark was slowly but steadily advancing, and the castle was materially within half a mile, when Chingachgook joined the two white men in the stern of the scow. His manner was calm, but it was evident to the others, who were familiar with the habits of the Indians, that he had something to communicate. Hurry was generally prompt to speak and, according to custom, he took the lead on this occasion.

"Out with it, red-skin," he cried, in his usual rough manner. "Have you discovered a chipmunk in a tree, or is there a salmon-trout swimming under the bottom of the scow? You find what a pale-face can do in the way of eyes, now, Sarpent, and mustn't wonder that they can see the land of the Indians from afar off."

"No good to go to Castle," put in Chingachgook with emphasis, the moment the other gave him an opportunity of speaking. "Huron there."

"The devil he is! — If this should turn out to be true, Floating Tom, a pretty trap were we about to pull down on our heads! Huron, there! — Well, this may be so; but no signs can I see of any thing, near or about the old hut, but logs, water, and bark — bating two or three windows, and one door."

Hutter called for the glass, and took a careful survey of the spot, before he ventured an opinion, at all; then he somewhat cavalierly expressed his dissent from that given by the Indian.

"You've got this glass wrong end foremost, Delaware," continued Hurry. "Neither the old man nor I can see any trail in the lake."

"No trail — water make no trail," said Hist, eagerly. "Stop boat — no go too near. Huron there!"

"Ay, that's it! — Stick to the same tale, and more people will believe you. I hope, Sarpent, you and your gal will agree in telling the same story arter marriage, as well as you do now. 'Huron, there!'— Whereabouts is he to be seen — in the padlock, or the chains, or the logs. There isn't a gaol in the colony that has a more lock up look about it, than old Tom's chiente, and I know something about gaols from exper'ence."

"No see moccasin," said Hist, impatiently "why no look — and see him."

"Give me the glass, Harry," interrupted Hutter, "and lower the sail. It is seldom that an Indian woman meddles, and when she does, there is generally a cause for it. There is, truly, a moccasin floating against one of the piles, and it may or may not be a sign that the castle hasn't escaped visitors in our absence. Moccasins are no rarities, however, for I wear 'em myself; and Deerslayer wears 'em, and you wear 'em, March, and, for that matter so does Hetty, quite as often as she wears shoes, though I never yet saw Judith trust her pretty foot in a moccasin."

Hurry had lowered the sail, and by this time the Ark was within two hundred yards of the castle, setting in, nearer and nearer, each moment, but at a rate too slow to excite any uneasiness. Each now took the glass in turn, and the castle, and every thing near it, was subjected to a scrutiny still more rigid than ever. There the moccasin lay, beyond a question, floating so lightly, and preserving its form so well, that it was scarcely wet. It had caught by a piece of the rough bark of one of the piles, on the exterior of the water-palisade that formed the dock already mentioned, which circumstance alone prevented it from drifting away before the air. There were many modes, however, of accounting for the presence of the moccasin, without supposing it to have been dropped by an enemy. It might have fallen from the platform, even while Hutter was in possession of the place, and drifted to the spot where it was now seen, remaining unnoticed until detected by the acute vision of Hist. It might have drifted from a distance, up or down the lake, and accidentally become attached to the pile, or palisade. It might have been thrown from a window, and alighted in that particular place; or it might certainly have fallen from a scout, or an assailant, during the past night, who was obliged to abandon it to the lake, in the deep obscurity which then prevailed.

All these conjectures passed from Hutter to Hurry, the former appearing disposed to regard the omen as a little sinister, while the latter treated it with his usual reckless disdain. As for the Indian, he was of opinion that the moccasin should be viewed as one would regard a trail in the woods, which might, or might not, equally, prove to be threatening. Hist, however, had something available to propose. She declared her readiness to take a canoe, to proceed to the palisade and bring away the moccasin, when its ornaments would show whether it came from the Canadas or not. Both the white men were disposed to accept this offer, but the Delaware interfered to prevent the risk. If such a service was to be undertaken, it best became a warrior to expose himself in its execution, and he gave his refusal to let his betrothed proceed, much in the quiet but brief manner in which an Indian husband issues his commands.

"Well then, Delaware, go yourself if you're so tender of your squaw," put in the unceremonious Hurry. "That moccasin must be had, or Floating Tom will keep off, here, at arm's length, till the hearth cools in his cabin. It's but a little deerskin, a'ter all, and cut this-a-way or that-a-way, it's not a skear-crow to frighten true hunters from their game. What say you, Serpent, shall you or I canoe it?"

"Let red man go. — Better eyes than pale-face — know Huron trick better, too."

"That I'll gainsay, to the hour of my death! A white man's eyes, and a white man's nose, and for that matter his sight and ears are all better than an Injin's when fairly tried. Time and ag'in have I put that to the proof, and what is proved is sartain. Still I suppose the poorest vagabond going, whether Delaware or Huron, can find his way to yonder hut and back ag'in, and so, Serpent, use your paddle and welcome."

Chingachgook was already in the canoe, and he dipped the implement the other named into the water, just as Hurry's limber tongue ceased. Wah-ta-Wah saw the departure of her warrior on this occasion with the submissive silence of an Indian girl, but with most of the misgivings and apprehensions of her sex. Throughout the whole of the past night, and down to the moment, when they used the glass together in the hut, Chingachgook had manifested as much manly tenderness towards his betrothed as one of the most refined sentiment could have shown under similar circumstances, but now every sign of weakness was lost in an appearance of stern resolution. Although Hist timidly endeavored to catch his eye as the canoe left the side of the Ark, the pride of a warrior would not permit him to meet her fond and anxious looks. The canoe departed and not a wandering glance rewarded her solicitude.

Nor were the Delaware's care and gravity misplaced, under the impressions with which he proceeded on this enterprise. If the enemy had really gained possession of the building he was obliged to put himself under the very muzzles of their rifles, as it were, and this too without the protection of any of that cover which forms so essential an ally in Indian warfare. It is scarcely possible to conceive of a service more dangerous, and had the Serpent been fortified by the experience of ten more years, or had his friend the Deerslayer been present, it would never have been attempted; the advantages in no degree compensating for the risk. But the pride of an Indian chief was acted on by the rivalry of colour, and it is not unlikely that the presence of the very creature from whom his ideas of manhood prevented his receiving a single glance, overflowing as he was with the love she so well merited, had no small influence on his determination.

Chingachgook paddled steadily towards the palisades, keeping his eyes on the different loops of the building. Each instant he expected to see the muzzle of a rifle protruded, or to hear its sharp crack; but he succeeded in reaching the piles in safety. Here he was, in a measure, protected, having the heads of the palisades between him and the hut, and the chances of any attempt on his life while thus covered, were greatly diminished. The canoe had reached the piles with its head inclining northward, and at a short distance from the moccasin. Instead of turning to pick up the latter, the Delaware slowly made the circuit of the whole building, deliberately examining every object that should betray the presence of enemies, or the commission of violence. Not a single sign could he discover, however, to confirm the suspicions that had been awakened. The stillness of desertion pervaded the building; not a fastening was displaced, not a window had been broken. The door looked as secure as at the hour when it was closed by Hutter, and even the gate of the dock had all the customary fastenings. In short, the most wary and jealous eye could detect no other evidence of the visit of enemies, than that which was connected with the appearance of the floating moccasin.

The Delaware was now greatly at a loss how to proceed. At one moment, as he came round in front of the castle, he was on the point of stepping up on the platform and of applying his eye to one of the loops, with a view of taking a direct personal inspection of the state of things within; but he hesitated. Though of little experience in such matters, himself, he had heard so much of Indian artifices through traditions, had listened with such breathless interest to the narration of the escapes of the elder warriors, and, in short, was so well schooled in the theory of his calling, that it was almost as

impossible for him to make any gross blunder on such an occasion, as it was for a well grounded scholar, who had commenced correctly, to fail in solving his problem in mathematics. Relinquishing the momentary intention to land, the chief slowly pursued his course round the palisades. As he approached the moccasin, having now nearly completed the circuit of the building, he threw the ominous article into the canoe, by a dexterous and almost imperceptible movement of his paddle. He was now ready to depart, but retreat was even more dangerous than the approach, as the eye could no longer be riveted on the loops. If there was really any one in the castle, the motive of the Delaware in reconnoitering must be understood, and it was the wisest way, however perilous it might be, to retire with an air of confidence, as if all distrust were terminated by the examination. Such, accordingly, was the course adopted by the Indian, who paddled deliberately away, taking the direction of the Ark, suffering no nervous impulse to quicken the motions of his arms, or to induce him to turn even a furtive glance behind him.

No tender wife, reared in the refinements of the highest civilization, ever met a husband on his return from the field with more of sensibility in her countenance than Hist discovered, as she saw the Great Serpent of the Delawares step, unharmed, into the Ark. Still she repressed her emotion, though the joy that sparkled in her dark eyes, and the smile that lighted her pretty mouth, spoke a language that her betrothed could understand.

“Well, Serpent,” cried Hurry, always the first to speak, “what news from the muskrats? Did they shew their teeth, as you surrounded their dwelling?”

“I no like him,” sententiously returned the Delaware. “Too still. So still, can see silence!”

“That’s downright Injin — as if any thing could make less noise than nothing! If you’ve no better reason than this to give, old Tom had better hoist his sail, and go and get his breakfast under his own roof. What has become of the moccasin?”

“Here,” returned Chingachgook, holding up his prize for the general inspection. The moccasin was examined, and Hist confidently pronounced it to be Huron, by the manner in which the porcupine’s quills were arranged on its front. Hutter and the Delaware, too, were decidedly of the same opinion. Admitting all this, however, it did not necessarily follow that its owners were in the castle. The moccasin might have drifted from a distance, or it might have fallen from the foot of some scout, who had quitted the place when his errand was accomplished. In short it explained nothing, while it awakened so much distrust.

Under the circumstances, Hutter and Hurry were not men to be long deterred from proceeding by proofs as slight as that of the moccasin. They hoisted the sail again, and the Ark was soon in motion, heading towards the castle. The wind or air continued light, and the movement was sufficiently slow to allow of a deliberate survey of the building, as the scow approached. The same death-like silence reigned, and it was difficult to fancy that any thing possessing animal life could be in or around the place. Unlike the Serpent, whose imagination had acted through his traditions until he was ready to perceive an artificial, in a natural stillness, the others saw nothing to apprehend in a tranquility that, in truth, merely denoted the repose of inanimate objects. The accessories of the scene, too, were soothing and calm, rather than exciting. The day had not yet advanced so far as to bring the sun above the horizon, but the heavens, the atmosphere, and the woods and lake were all seen under that softened light which immediately precedes his appearance, and which perhaps is the most witching period of the four and twenty hours. It is the moment when every thing is distinct, even the atmosphere seeming to possess a liquid lucidity, the hues appearing gray and softened, with the outlines of objects defined, and the perspective just as moral truths that are presented in their simplicity, without the meretricious aids of ornament or glitter. In a word, it is the moment when the senses seem to recover their powers, in the simplest and most accurate forms, like the mind emerging from the obscurity of doubts into the tranquility and peace of demonstration. Most of the influence that such a scene is apt to produce on those who are properly constituted in a moral sense, was lost on Hutter and Hurry; but both the Delawares, though too much accustomed to witness the loveliness of morning-tide to stop to analyze their feelings, were equally sensible of the beauties of the hour, though it was probably in a way unknown to themselves. It disposed the young warrior to peace, and never had he felt less longings for the glory of the combat, than when he joined Hist in the cabin, the instant the scow rubbed against the side of the platform. From the indulgence of such gentle emotions, however, he was aroused by a rude summons from Hurry, who called on him to come forth and help to take in the sail, and to secure the Ark.

Chingachgook obeyed, and by the time he had reached the head of the scow, Hurry was on the platform, stamping his feet, like one glad to touch what, by comparison, might be called terra firma, and proclaiming his indifference to the whole

Huron tribe in his customary noisy, dogmatical manner. Hutter had hauled a canoe up to the head of the scow, and was already about to undo the fastenings of the gate, in order to enter within the 'dock.' March had no other motive in landing than a senseless bravado, and having shaken the door in a manner to put its solidity to the proof, he joined Hutter in the canoe and began to aid him in opening the gate. The reader will remember that this mode of entrance was rendered necessary by the manner in which the owner of this singular residence habitually secured it, whenever it was left empty; more particularly at moments when danger was apprehended. Hutter had placed a line in the Delaware's hand, on entering the canoe, intimating that the other was to fasten the Ark to the platform and to lower the sail. Instead of following these directions, however, Chingachgook left the sail standing, and throwing the bight of the rope over the head of a pile, he permitted the Ark to drift round until it lay against the defences, in a position where it could be entered only by means of a boat, or by passing along the summits of the palisades; the latter being an exploit that required some command of the feet, and which was not to be attempted in the face of a resolute enemy.

In consequence of this change in the position of the scow, which was effected before Hutter had succeeded in opening the gate of his dock, the Ark and the Castle lay, as sailors would express it, yard-arm and yard-arm, kept asunder some ten or twelve feet by means of the piles. As the scow pressed close against the latter, their tops formed a species of breast work that rose to the height of a man's head, covering in a certain degree the parts of the scow that were not protected by the cabin. The Delaware surveyed this arrangement with great satisfaction and, as the canoe of Hutter passed through the gate into the dock, he thought that he might defend his position against any garrison in the castle, for a sufficient time, could he but have had the helping arm of his friend Deerslayer. As it was, he felt comparatively secure, and no longer suffered the keen apprehensions he had lately experienced in behalf of Hist.

A single shove sent the canoe from the gate to the trap beneath the castle. Here Hutter found all fast, neither padlock nor chain nor bar having been molested. The key was produced, the locks removed, the chain loosened, and the trap pushed upward. Hurry now thrust his head in at the opening; the arms followed, and the colossal legs rose without any apparent effort. At the next instant, his heavy foot was heard stamping in the passage above; that which separated the chambers of the father and daughters, and into which the trap opened. He then gave a shout of triumph.

"Come on, old Tom," the reckless woodsman called out from within the building — "here's your tenement, safe and sound; ay, and as empty as a nut that has passed half an hour in the paws of a squirrel! The Delaware brags of being able to see silence; let him come here, and he may feel it, in the bargain."

"Any silence where you are, Hurry Harry," returned Hutter, thrusting his head in at the hole as he uttered the last word, which instantly caused his voice to sound smothered to those without — "Any silence where you are, ought to be both seen and felt, for it's unlike any other silence."

"Come, come, old fellow; hoist yourself up, and we'll open doors and windows and let in the fresh air to brighten up matters. Few words in troublesome times, make men the best fri'nds. Your darter Judith is what I call a misbehaving young woman, and the hold of the whole family on me is so much weakened by her late conduct, that it wouldn't take a speech as long as the ten commandments to send me off to the river, leaving you and your traps, your Ark and your children, your man servants and your maid servants, your oxen and your asses, to fight this battle with the Iroquois by yourselves. Open that window, Floating Tom, and I'll blunder through and do the same job to the front door."

A moment of silence succeeded, and a noise like that produced by the fall of a heavy body followed. A deep execration from Hurry succeeded, and then the whole interior of the building seemed alive. The noises that now so suddenly, and we may add so unexpectedly even to the Delaware, broke the stillness within, could not be mistaken. They resembled those that would be produced by a struggle between tigers in a cage. Once or twice the Indian yell was given, but it seemed smothered, and as if it proceeded from exhausted or compressed throats, and, in a single instance, a deep and another shockingly revolting execration came from the throat of Hurry. It appeared as if bodies were constantly thrown upon the floor with violence, as often rising to renew the struggle. Chingachgook felt greatly at a loss what to do. He had all the arms in the Ark, Hutter and Hurry having proceeded without their rifles, but there was no means of using them, or of passing them to the hands of their owners. The combatants were literally caged, rendering it almost as impossible under the circumstances to get out, as to get into the building. Then there was Hist to embarrass his movements, and to cripple his efforts. With a view to relieve himself from this disadvantage, he told the girl to take the remaining canoe and to join Hutter's daughters, who were incautiously but deliberately approaching, in order to save herself, and to warn the others of their danger. But the girl positively and firmly refused to comply. At that moment no human power, short of an exercise of



superior physical force, could have induced her to quit the Ark. The exigency of the moment did not admit of delay, and the Delaware seeing no possibility of serving his friends, cut the line and by a strong shove forced the scow some twenty feet clear of the piles. Here he took the sweeps and succeeded in getting a short distance to windward, if any direction could be thus termed in so light an air, but neither the time, nor his skill at the oars, allowed the distance to be great. When he ceased rowing, the Ark might have been a hundred yards from the platform, and half that distance to the southward of it, the sail being lowered. Judith and Hetty had now discovered that something was wrong, and were stationary a thousand feet farther north. All this while the furious struggle continued within the house. In scenes like these, events thicken in less time than they can be related. From the moment when the first fall was heard within the building to that when the Delaware ceased his awkward attempts to row, it might have been three or four minutes, but it had evidently served to weaken the combatants. The oaths and execrations of Hurry were no longer heard, and even the struggles had lost some of their force and fury. Nevertheless they still continued with unabated perseverance. At this instant the door flew open, and the fight was transferred to the platform, the light and the open air. A Huron had undone the fastenings of the door, and three or four of his tribe rushed after him upon the narrow space, as if glad to escape from some terrible scene within. The body of another followed, pitched headlong through the door with terrific violence. Then March appeared, raging like a lion at bay, and for an instant freed from his numerous enemies. Hutter was already a captive and bound. There was now a pause in the struggle, which resembled a lull in a tempest. The necessity of breathing was common to all, and the combatants stood watching each other, like mastiffs that have been driven from their holds, and are waiting for a favorable opportunity of renewing them. We shall profit by this pause to relate the manner in which the Indians had obtained possession of the castle, and this the more willingly because it may be necessary to explain to the reader why a conflict which had been so close and fierce, should have also been so comparatively bloodless. Rivenoak and his companion, particularly the latter who had appeared to be a subordinate and occupied solely with his raft, had made the closest observations in their visits to the castle. Even the boy had brought away minute and valuable information. By these means the Hurons obtained a general idea of the manner in which the place was constructed and secured, as well as of details that enabled them to act intelligently in the dark. Notwithstanding the care that Hutter had taken to drop the Ark on the east side of the building when he was in the act of transferring the furniture from the former to the latter, he had been watched in a way to render the precaution useless. Scouts were on the look-out on the eastern as well as on the western shore of the lake, and the whole proceeding had been noted. As soon as it was dark, rafts like that already described approached from both shores to reconnoitre, and the Ark had passed within fifty feet of one of them without its being discovered; the men it held lying at their length on the logs, so as to blend themselves and their slow moving machine with the water. When these two sets of adventurers drew near the castle they encountered each other, and after communicating their respective observations, they unhesitatingly approached the building. As had been expected, it was found empty. The rafts were immediately sent for a reinforcement to the shore, and two of the savages remained to profit by their situation. These men succeeded in getting on the roof, and by removing some of the bark, in entering what might be termed the garret. Here they were found by their companions. Hatchets now opened a hole through the squared logs of the upper floor, through which no less than eight of the most athletic of the Indians dropped into the rooms beneath. Here they were left, well supplied with arms and provisions, either to stand a siege, or to make a sortie, as the case might require. The night was passed in sleep, as is usual with Indians in a state of inactivity. The returning day brought them a view of the approach of the Ark through the loops, the only manner in which light and air were now admitted, the windows being closed most effectually with plank, rudely fashioned to fit. As soon as it was ascertained that the two white men were about to enter by the trap, the chief who directed the proceedings of the Hurons took his measures accordingly. He removed all the arms from his own people, even to the knives, in distrust of savage ferocity when awakened by personal injuries, and he hid them where they could not be found without a search. Ropes of bark were then prepared, and taking their stations in the three different rooms, they all waited for the signal to fall upon their intended captives. As soon as the party had entered the building, men without replaced the bark of the roof, removed every sign of their visit, with care, and then departed for the shore. It was one of these who had dropped his moccasin, which he had not been able to find again in the dark. Had the death of the girl been known, it is probable nothing could have saved the lives of Hurry and Hutter, but that event occurred after the ambush was laid, and at a distance of several miles from the encampment near the castle. Such were the means that had been employed to produce the state of things we shall continue to describe.

## CHAPTER 20

*"Now all is done that man can do,  
And all is done in vain!  
My love! my native land, adieu  
For I must cross the main, My dear,  
For I must cross the main."*

—ROBERT BURNS, "IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING," II. 7–12.

The last chapter we left the combatants breathing in their narrow lists. Accustomed to the rude sports of wrestling and jumping, then so common in America, more especially on the frontiers, Hurry possessed an advantage, in addition to his prodigious strength, that had rendered the struggle less unequal than it might otherwise appear to be. This alone had enabled him to hold out so long, against so many enemies, for the Indian is by no means remarkable for his skill, or force, in athletic exercises. As yet, no one had been seriously hurt, though several of the savages had received severe falls, and he, in particular, who had been thrown bodily upon the platform, might be said to be temporarily hors de combat. Some of the rest were limping, and March himself had not entirely escaped from bruises, though want of breath was the principal loss that both sides wished to repair.

Under circumstances like those in which the parties were placed, a truce, let it come from what cause it might, could not well be of long continuance. The arena was too confined, and the distrust of treachery too great, to admit of this. Contrary to what might be expected in his situation, Hurry was the first to recommence hostilities. Whether this proceeded from policy, an idea that he might gain some advantage by making a sudden and unexpected assault, or was the fruit of irritation and his undying hatred of an Indian, it is impossible to say. His onset was furious, however, and at first it carried all before it. He seized the nearest Huron by the waist, raised him entirely from the platform, and hurled him into the water, as if he had been a child. In half a minute, two more were at his side, one of whom received a grave injury by the friend who had just preceded him. But four enemies remained, and, in a hand to hand conflict, in which no arms were used but those which nature had furnished, Hurry believed himself fully able to cope with that number of red-skins.

"Hurrah! Old Tom," he shouted — "The rascals are taking to the lake, and I'll soon have 'em all swimming!" As these words were uttered a violent kick in the face sent back the injured Indian, who had caught at the edge of the platform, and was endeavoring to raise himself to its level, helplessly and hopelessly into the water. When the affray was over, his dark body was seen, through the limpid element of the Glimmerglass, lying, with outstretched arms, extended on the bottom of the shoal on which the Castle stood, clinging to the sands and weeds, as if life were to be retained by this frenzied grasp of death. A blow sent into the pit of another's stomach doubled him up like a worm that had been trodden on, and but two able bodied foes remained to be dealt with. One of these, however, was not only the largest and strongest of the Hurons, but he was also the most experienced of their warriors present, and that one whose sinews were the best strung in fights, and by marches on the warpath. This man fully appreciated the gigantic strength of his opponent, and had carefully husbanded his own. He was also equipped in the best manner for such a conflict, standing in nothing but his breech-cloth, the model of a naked and beautiful statue of agility and strength. To grasp him required additional dexterity and unusual force. Still Hurry did not hesitate, but the kick that had actually destroyed one fellow creature was no sooner given, than he closed in with this formidable antagonist, endeavoring to force him into the water, also. The struggle that succeeded was truly frightful. So fierce did it immediately become, and so quick and changeful were the evolutions of the athletes, that the remaining savage had no chance for interfering, had he possessed the desire; but wonder and apprehension held him spell bound. He was an inexperienced youth, and his blood curdled as he witnessed the fell strife of human passions, exhibited too, in an unaccustomed form.

Hurry first attempted to throw his antagonist. With this view he seized him by the throat, and an arm, and tripped with the quickness and force of an American borderer. The effect was frustrated by the agile movements of the Huron, who had clothes to grasp by, and whose feet avoided the attempt with a nimbleness equal to that with which it was made. Then followed a sort of melee, if such a term can be applied to a struggle between two in which no efforts were strictly visible, the limbs and bodies of the combatants assuming so many attitudes and contortions as to defeat observation. This confused but fierce rally lasted less than a minute, however; when, Hurry, furious at having his strength baffled by the agility and nakedness of his foe, made a desperate effort, which sent the Huron from him, hurling his body violently against the logs of

the hut. The concussion was so great as momentarily to confuse the latter's faculties. The pain, too, extorted a deep groan; an unusual concession to agony to escape a red man in the heat of battle. Still he rushed forward again to meet his enemy, conscious that his safety rested on it's resolution. Hurry now seized the other by the waist, raised him bodily from the platform, and fell with his own great weight on the form beneath. This additional shock so stunned the sufferer, that his gigantic white opponent now had him completely at his mercy. Passing his hands around the throat of his victim, he compressed them with the strength of a vice, fairly doubling the head of the Huron over the edge of the platform, until the chin was uppermost, with the infernal strength he expended. An instant sufficed to show the consequences. The eyes of the sufferer seemed to start forward, his tongue protruded, and his nostrils dilated nearly to splitting. At this instant a rope of bark, having an eye, was passed dexterously within the two arms of Hurry, the end threaded the eye, forming a noose, and his elbows were drawn together behind his back, with a power that all his gigantic strength could not resist. Reluctantly, even under such circumstances, did the exasperated borderer see his hands drawn from their deadly grasp, for all the evil passions were then in the ascendant. Almost at the same instant a similar fastening secured his ankles, and his body was rolled to the centre of the platform as helplessly, and as cavalierly, as if it were a log of wood. His rescued antagonist, however, did not rise, for while he began again to breathe, his head still hung helplessly over the edge of the logs, and it was thought at first that his neck was dislocated. He recovered gradually only, and it was hours before he could walk. Some fancied that neither his body, nor his mind, ever totally recovered from this near approach to death.

Hurry owed his defeat and capture to the intensity with which he had concentrated all his powers on his fallen foe. While thus occupied, the two Indians he had hurled into the water mounted to the heads of the piles, along which they passed, and joined their companion on the platform. The latter had so far rallied his faculties as to have gotten the ropes, which were in readiness for use as the others appeared, and they were applied in the manner related, as Hurry lay pressing his enemy down with his whole weight, intent only on the horrible office of strangling him. Thus were the tables turned, in a single moment; he who had been so near achieving a victory that would have been renowned for ages, by means of traditions, throughout all that region, lying helpless, bound and a captive. So fearful had been the efforts of the pale-face, and so prodigious the strength he exhibited, that even as he lay tethered like a sheep before them, they regarded him with respect, and not without dread. The helpless body of their stoutest warrior was still stretched on the platform, and, as they cast their eyes towards the lake, in quest of the comrade that had been hurled into it so unceremoniously, and of whom they had lost sight in the confusion of the fray, they perceived his lifeless form clinging to the grass on the bottom, as already described. These several circumstances contributed to render the victory of the Hurons almost as astounding to themselves as a defeat.

Chingachgook and his betrothed witnessed the whole of this struggle from the Ark. When the three Hurons were about to pass the cords around the arms of the prostrate Hurry the Delaware sought his rifle, but, before he could use it the white man was bound and the mischief was done. He might still bring down an enemy, but to obtain the scalp was impossible, and the young chief, who would so freely risk his own life to obtain such a trophy, hesitated about taking that of a foe without such an object in view. A glance at Hist, and the recollection of what might follow, checked any transient wish for revenge. The reader has been told that Chingachgook could scarcely be said to know how to manage the oars of the Ark at all, however expert he might be in the use of the paddle. Perhaps there is no manual labor at which men are so bungling and awkward, as in their first attempts to pull oar, even the experienced mariner, or boat man, breaking down in his efforts to figure with the celebrated rullock of the gondolier. In short it is, temporarily, an impracticable thing for a new beginner to succeed with a single oar, but in this case it was necessary to handle two at the same time, and those of great size. Sweeps, or large oars, however, are sooner rendered of use by the raw hand than lighter implements, and this was the reason that the Delaware had succeeded in moving the Ark as well as he did in a first trial. That trial, notwithstanding, sufficed to produce distrust, and he was fully aware of the critical situation in which Hist and himself were now placed, should the Hurons take to the canoe that was still lying beneath the trap, and come against them. At the moment he thought of putting Hist into the canoe in his own possession, and of taking to the eastern mountain in the hope of reaching the Delaware villages by direct flight. But many considerations suggested themselves to put a stop to this indiscreet step. It was almost certain that scouts watched the lake on both sides, and no canoe could possibly approach shore without being seen from the hills. Then a trail could not be concealed from Indian eyes, and the strength of Hist was unequal to a flight sufficiently sustained to outstrip the pursuit of trained warriors. This was a part of America in which the Indians did not know the use of horses, and everything would depend on the physical energies of the fugitives. Last, but far from being

least, were the thoughts connected with the situation of Deerslayer, a friend who was not to be deserted in his extremity.

Hist in some particulars reasoned, and even felt, differently though she arrived at the same conclusions. Her own anger disturbed her less than her concern for the two sisters, on whose behalf her womanly sympathies were now strongly enlisted. The canoe of the girls, by the time the struggle on the platform had ceased, was within three hundred yards of the castle, and here Judith ceased paddling, the evidences of strife first becoming apparent to the eyes. She and Hetty were standing erect, anxiously endeavoring to ascertain what had occurred, but unable to satisfy their doubts from the circumstance that the building, in a great measure, concealed the scene of action.

The parties in the Ark, and in the canoe, were indebted to the ferocity of Hurry's attack for their momentary security. In any ordinary case, the girls would have been immediately captured, a measure easy of execution now the savages had a canoe, were it not for the rude check the audacity of the Hurons had received in the recent struggle. It required some little time to recover from the effects of this violent scene, and this so much the more, because the principal man of the party, in the way of personal prowess at least, had been so great a sufferer. Still it was of the last importance that Judith and her sister should seek immediate refuge in the Ark, where the defences offered a temporary shelter at least, and the first step was to devise the means of inducing them to do so. Hist showed herself in the stern of the scow, and made many gestures and signs, in vain, in order to induce the girls to make a circuit to avoid the Castle, and to approach the Ark from the eastward. But these signs were distrusted or misunderstood. It is probable Judith was not yet sufficiently aware of the real state of things to put full confidence in either party. Instead of doing as desired, she rather kept more aloof, paddling slowly back to the north, or into the broadest part of the lake, where she could command the widest view, and had the fairest field for flight before her. At this instant the sun appeared above the pines of the eastern range of mountains and a light southerly breeze arose, as was usual enough at that season and hour. Chingachgook lost no time in hoisting the sail. Whatever might be in reserve for him, there could be no question that it was every way desirable to get the Ark at such a distance from the castle as to reduce his enemies to the necessity of approaching the former in the canoe, which the chances of war had so inopportunistically, for his wishes and security, thrown into their hands. The appearance of the opening duck seemed first to arouse the Hurons from their apathy, and by the time the head of the scow had fallen off before the wind, which it did unfortunately in the wrong direction, bringing it within a few yards of the platform, Hist found it necessary to warn her lover of the importance of covering his person against the rifles of his foes. This was a danger to be avoided under all circumstances, and so much the more, because the Delaware found that Hist would not take to the cover herself so long as he remained exposed. Accordingly, Chingachgook abandoned the scow to its own movements, forced Hist into the cabin, the doors of which he immediately secured, and then he looked about him for the rifles. The situation of the parties was now so singular as to merit a particular description. The Ark was within sixty yards of the castle, a little to the southward, or to windward of it, with its sail full, and the steering oar abandoned. The latter, fortunately, was loose, so that it produced no great influence on the crab like movements of the unwieldy craft. The sail being as sailors term it, flying, or having no braces, the air forced the yard forward, though both sheets were fast. The effect was threefold on a boat with a bottom that was perfectly flat, and which drew merely some three or four inches water. It pressed the head slowly round to leeward, it forced the whole fabric bodily in the same direction at the same time, and the water that unavoidably gathered under the lee gave the scow also a forward movement. All these changes were exceedingly slow, however, for the wind was not only light, but it was baffling as usual, and twice or thrice the sail shook. Once it was absolutely taken aback.

Had there been any keel to the Ark, it would inevitably have run foul of the platform, bows on, when it is probable nothing could have prevented the Hurons from carrying it; more particularly as the sail would have enabled them to approach under cover. As it was, the scow wore slowly round, barely clearing that part of the building. The piles projecting several feet, they were not cleared, but the head of the slow moving craft caught between two of them, by one of its square corners, and hung. At this moment the Delaware was vigilantly watching through a loop for an opportunity to fire, while the Hurons kept within the building, similarly occupied. The exhausted warrior reclined against the hut, there having been no time to remove him, and Hurry lay, almost as helpless as a log, tethered like a sheep on its way to the slaughter, near the middle of the platform. Chingachgook could have slain the first, at any moment, but his scalp would have been safe, and the young chief disdained to strike a blow that could lead to neither honor nor advantage.

"Run out one of the poles, Serpent, if Serpent you be," said Hurry, amid the groans that the tightness of the ligatures was beginning to extort from him — "run out one of the poles, and shove the head of the scow off, and you'll drift clear of us — and, when you've done that good turn for yourself just finish this gagging blackguard for me."

The appeal of Hurry, however, had no other effect than to draw the attention of Hist to his situation. This quick witted creature comprehended it at a glance. His ankles were bound with several turns of stout bark rope, and his arms, above the elbows, were similarly secured behind his back; barely leaving him a little play of the hands and wrists. Putting her mouth near a loop she said in a low but distinct voice —“Why you don’t roll here, and fall in scow? Chingachgook shoot Huron, if he chase!”

“By the Lord, gal, that’s a judgematical thought, and it shall be tried, if the stern of your scow will come a little nearer. Put a bed at the bottom, for me to fall on.”

This was said at a happy moment, for, tired of waiting, all the Indians made a rapid discharge of their rifles, almost simultaneously, injuring no one; though several bullets passed through the loops. Hist had heard part of Hurry’s words, but most of what he said was lost in the sharp reports of the firearms. She undid the bar of the door that led to the stern of the scow, but did not dare to expose her person. All this time, the head of the Ark hung, but by a gradually decreasing hold as the other end swung slowly round, nearer and nearer to the platform. Hurry, who now lay with his face towards the Ark, occasionally writhing and turning over like one in pain, evolutions he had performed ever since he was secured, watched every change, and, at last, he saw that the whole vessel was free, and was beginning to grate slowly along the sides of the piles. The attempt was desperate, but it seemed to be the only chance for escaping torture and death, and it suited the reckless daring of the man’s character. Waiting to the last moment, in order that the stern of the scow might fairly rub against the platform, he began to writhe again, as if in intolerable suffering, execrating all Indians in general, and the Hurons in particular, and then he suddenly and rapidly rolled over and over, taking the direction of the stern of the scow. Unfortunately, Hurry’s shoulders required more space to revolve in than his feet, and by the time he reached the edge of the platform his direction had so far changed as to carry him clear of the Ark altogether, and the rapidity of his revolutions and the emergency admitting of no delay, he fell into the water. At this instant, Chingachgook, by an understanding with his betrothed, drew the fire of the Hurons again, not a man of whom saw the manner in which one whom they knew to be effectually tethered, had disappeared. But Hist’s feelings were strongly interested in the success of so bold a scheme, and she watched the movements of Hurry as the cat watches the mouse. The moment he was in motion she foresaw the consequences, and this the more readily, as the scow was now beginning to move with some steadiness, and she bethought her of the means of saving him. With a sort of instinctive readiness, she opened the door at the very moment the rifles were ringing in her ears, and protected by the intervening cabin, she stepped into the stem of the scow in time to witness the fall of Hurry into the lake. Her foot was unconsciously placed on the end of one of the sheets of the sail, which was fastened aft, and catching up all the spare rope with the awkwardness, but also with the generous resolution of a woman, she threw it in the direction of the helpless Hurry. The line fell on the head and body of the sinking man and he not only succeeded in grasping separate parts of it with his hands, but he actually got a portion of it between his teeth. Hurry was an expert swimmer, and tethered as he was he resorted to the very expedient that philosophy and reflection would have suggested. He had fallen on his back, and instead of floundering and drowning himself by desperate efforts to walk on the water, he permitted his body to sink as low as possible, and was already submerged, with the exception of his face, when the line reached him. In this situation he might possibly have remained until rescued by the Hurons, using his hands as fishes use their fins, had he received no other succour, but the movement of the Ark soon tightened the rope, and of course he was dragged gently ahead holding even pace with the scow. The motion aided in keeping his face above the surface of the water, and it would have been possible for one accustomed to endurance to have been towed a mile in this singular but simple manner.

It has been said that the Hurons did not observe the sudden disappearance of Hurry. In his present situation he was not only hid from view by the platform, but, as the Ark drew slowly ahead, impelled by a sail that was now filled, he received the same friendly service from the piles. The Hurons, indeed, were too intent on endeavoring to slay their Delaware foe, by sending a bullet through some one of the loops or crevices of the cabin, to bethink them at all of one whom they fancied so thoroughly tied. Their great concern was the manner in which the Ark rubbed past the piles, although its motion was lessened at least one half by the friction, and they passed into the northern end of the castle in order to catch opportunities of firing through the loops of that part of the building. Chingachgook was similarly occupied, and remained as ignorant as his enemies of the situation of Hurry. As the Ark grated along the rifles sent their little clouds of smoke from one cover to the other, but the eyes and movements of the opposing parties were too quick to permit any injury to be done. At length one side had the mortification and the other the pleasure of seeing the scow swing clear of the

piles altogether, when it immediately moved away, with a materially accelerated motion, towards the north.

Chingachgook now first learned from Hist the critical condition of Hurry. To have exposed either of their persons in the stern of the scow would have been certain death, but fortunately the sheet to which the man clung led forward to the foot of the sail. The Delaware found means to unloosen it from the cleet aft, and Hist, who was already forward for that purpose, immediately began to pull upon the line. At this moment Hurry was towing fifty or sixty feet astern, with nothing but his face above water. As he was dragged out clear of the castle and the piles he was first perceived by the Hurons, who raised a hideous yell and commenced a fire on, what may very well be termed the floating mass. It was at the same instant that Hist began to pull upon the line forward — a circumstance that probably saved Hurry's life, aided by his own self-possession and border readiness. The first bullet struck the water directly on the spot where the broad chest of the young giant was visible through the pure element, and might have pierced his heart had the angle at which it was fired been less acute. Instead of penetrating the lake, however, it glanced from its smooth surface, rose, and buried itself in the logs of the cabin near the spot at which Chingachgook had shown himself the minute before, while clearing the line from the cleet. A second, and a third, and a fourth bullet followed, all meeting with the same resistance of the water, though Hurry sensibly felt the violence of the blows they struck upon the lake so immediately above, and so near his breast. Discovering their mistake, the Hurons now changed their plan, and aimed at the uncovered face; but by this time Hist was pulling on the line, the target advanced and the deadly missiles still fell upon the water. In another moment the body was dragged past the end of the scow and became concealed. As for the Delaware and Hist, they worked perfectly covered by the cabin, and in less time than it requires to tell it, they had hauled the huge frame of Harry to the place they occupied. Chingachgook stood in readiness with his keen knife, and bending over the side of the scow he soon severed the bark that bound the limbs of the borderer. To raise him high enough to reach the edge of the boat and to aid him in entering were less easy, as Hurry's arms were still nearly useless, but both were done in time, when the liberated man staggered forward and fell exhausted and helpless into the bottom of the scow. Here we shall leave him to recover his strength and the due circulation of his blood, while we proceed with the narrative of events that crowd upon us too fast to admit of any postponement. The moment the Hurons lost sight of the body of Hurry they gave a common yell of disappointment, and three of the most active of their number ran to the trap and entered the canoe. It required some little delay, however, to embark with their weapons, to find the paddles and, if we may use a phrase so purely technical, "to get out of dock." By this time Hurry was in the scow, and the Delaware had his rifles again in readiness. As the Ark necessarily sailed before the wind, it had got by this time quite two hundred yards from the castle, and was sliding away each instant, farther and farther, though with a motion so easy as scarcely to stir the water. The canoe of the girls was quite a quarter of a mile distant from the Ark, obviously keeping aloof, in ignorance of what had occurred, and in apprehension of the consequences of venturing too near. They had taken the direction of the eastern shore, endeavoring at the same time to get to windward of the Ark, and in a manner between the two parties, as if distrusting which was to be considered a friend, and which an enemy. The girls, from long habit, used the paddles with great dexterity, and Judith, in particular, had often sportively gained races, in trials of speed with the youths that occasionally visited the lake.

When the three Hurons emerged from behind the palisades, and found themselves on the open lake, and under the necessity of advancing unprotected on the Ark, if they persevered in the original design, their ardor sensibly cooled. In a bark canoe they were totally without cover, and Indian discretion was entirely opposed to such a sacrifice of life as would most probably follow any attempt to assault an enemy entrenched as effectually as the Delaware. Instead of following the Ark, therefore, these three warriors inclined towards the eastern shore, keeping at a safe distance from the rifles of Chingachgook. But this manoeuvre rendered the position of the girls exceedingly critical. It threatened to place them if not between two fires, at least between two dangers, or what they conceived to be dangers, and instead of permitting the Hurons to enclose her, in what she fancied a sort of net, Judith immediately commenced her retreat in a southern direction, at no very great distance from the shore. She did not dare to land; if such an expedient were to be resorted to at all, she could only venture on it in the last extremity. At first the Indians paid little or no attention to the other canoe, for, fully apprised of its contents, they deemed its capture of comparatively little moment, while the Ark, with its imaginary treasures, the persons of the Delaware and of Hurry, and its means of movement on a large scale, was before them. But this Ark had its dangers as well as its temptations, and after wasting near an hour in vacillating evolutions, always at a safe distance from the rifle, the Hurons seemed suddenly to take their resolution, and began to display it by giving eager chase to the girls.

When this last design was adopted, the circumstances of all parties, as connected with their relative positions, were materially changed. The Ark had sailed and drifted quite half a mile, and was nearly that distance due north of the castle. As soon as the Delaware perceived that the girls avoided him, unable to manage his unwieldy craft, and knowing that flight from a bark canoe, in the event of pursuit, would be a useless expedient if attempted, he had lowered his sail, in the hope it might induce the sisters to change their plan and to seek refuge in the scow. This demonstration produced no other effect than to keep the Ark nearer to the scene of action, and to enable those in her to become witnesses of the chase. The canoe of Judith was about a quarter of a mile south of that of the Hurons, a little nearer to the east shore, and about the same distance to the southward of the castle as it was from the hostile canoe, a circumstance which necessarily put the last nearly abreast of Hutter's fortress. With the several parties thus situated the chase commenced.

At the moment when the Hurons so suddenly changed their mode of attack their canoe was not in the best possible racing trim. There were but two paddles, and the third man so much extra and useless cargo. Then the difference in weight between the sisters and the other two men, more especially in vessels so extremely light, almost neutralized any difference that might proceed from the greater strength of the Hurons, and rendered the trial of speed far from being as unequal as it might seem. Judith did not commence her exertions until the near approach of the other canoe rendered the object of the movement certain, and then she exhorted Hetty to aid her with her utmost skill and strength.

"Why should we run, Judith?" asked the simple minded girl. "The Hurons have never harmed me, nor do I think they ever will."

"That may be true as to you, Hetty, but it will prove very different with me. Kneel down and say your prayer, and then rise and do your utmost to help escape. Think of me, dear girl, too, as you pray."

Judith gave these directions from a mixed feeling; first because she knew that her sister ever sought the support of her great ally in trouble, and next because a sensation of feebleness and dependance suddenly came over her own proud spirit, in that moment of apparent desertion and trial. The prayer was quickly said, however, and the canoe was soon in rapid motion. Still, neither party resorted to their greatest exertions from the outset, both knowing that the chase was likely to be arduous and long. Like two vessels of war that are preparing for an encounter, they seemed desirous of first ascertaining their respective rates of speed, in order that they might know how to graduate their exertions, previously to the great effort. A few minutes sufficed to show the Hurons that the girls were expert, and that it would require all their skill and energies to overtake them.

Judith had inclined towards the eastern shore at the commencement of the chase, with a vague determination of landing and flying to the woods as a last resort, but as she approached the land, the certainty that scouts must be watching her movements made her reluctance to adopt such an expedient unconquerable. Then she was still fresh, and had sanguine hopes of being able to tire out her pursuers. With such feelings she gave a sweep with her paddle, and sheered off from the fringe of dark hemlocks beneath the shades of which she was so near entering, and held her way again, more towards the centre of the lake. This seemed the instant favorable for the Hurons to make their push, as it gave them the entire breadth of the sheet to do it in; and this too in the widest part, as soon as they had got between the fugitives and the land. The canoes now flew, Judith making up for what she wanted in strength by her great dexterity and self command. For half a mile the Indians gained no material advantage, but the continuance of so great exertions for so many minutes sensibly affected all concerned. Here the Indians resorted to an expedient that enabled them to give one of their party time to breathe, by shifting their paddles from hand to hand, and this too without sensibly relaxing their efforts.

Judith occasionally looked behind her, and she saw this expedient practised. It caused her immediately to distrust the result, since her powers of endurance were not likely to hold out against those of men who had the means of relieving each other. Still she persevered, allowing no very visible consequences immediately to follow the change.

As yet the Indians had not been able to get nearer to the girls than two hundred yards, though they were what seamen would term "in their wake"; or in a direct line behind them, passing over the same track of water. This made the pursuit what is technically called a "stern chase", which is proverbially a "long chase": the meaning of which is that, in consequence of the relative positions of the parties, no change becomes apparent except that which is a direct gain in the nearest possible approach. "Long" as this species of chase is admitted to be, however, Judith was enabled to perceive that the Hurons were sensibly drawing nearer and nearer, before she had gained the centre of the lake. She was not a girl to despair, but there was an instant when she thought of yielding, with the wish of being carried to the camp where she knew the Deerslayer to be a captive; but the considerations connected with the means she hoped to be able to employ in order to

procure his release immediately interposed, in order to stimulate her to renewed exertions. Had there been any one there to note the progress of the two canoes, he would have seen that of Judith flying swiftly away from its pursuers, as the girl gave it freshly impelled speed, while her mind was thus dwelling on her own ardent and generous schemes. So material, indeed, was the difference in the rate of going between the two canoes for the next five minutes, that the Hurons began to be convinced all their powers must be exerted or they would suffer the disgrace of being baffled by women. Making a furious effort under the mortification of such a conviction, one of the strongest of their party broke his paddle at the very moment when he had taken it from the hand of a comrade to relieve him. This at once decided the matter, a canoe containing three men and having but one paddle being utterly unable to overtake fugitives like the daughters of Thomas Hutter.

"There, Judith!" exclaimed Hetty, who saw the accident, "I hope now you will own, that praying is useful! The Hurons have broke a paddle, and they never can overtake us."

"I never denied it, poor Hetty, and sometimes wish in bitterness of spirit that I had prayed more myself, and thought less of my beauty! As you say, we are now safe and need only go a little south and take breath."

This was done; the enemy giving up the pursuit, as suddenly as a ship that has lost an important spar, the instant the accident occurred. Instead of following Judith's canoe, which was now lightly skimming over the water towards the south, the Hurons turned their bows towards the castle, where they soon arrived and landed. The girls, fearful that some spare paddles might be found in or about the buildings, continued on, nor did they stop until so distant from their enemies as to give them every chance of escape, should the chase be renewed. It would seem that the savages meditated no such design, but at the end of an hour their canoe, filled with men, was seen quitting the castle and steering towards the shore. The girls were without food, and they now drew nearer to the buildings and the Ark, having finally made up their minds from its manoeuvres that the latter contained friends.

Notwithstanding the seeming desertion of the castle, Judith approached it with extreme caution. The Ark was now quite a mile to the northward, but sweeping up towards the buildings, and this, too, with a regularity of motion that satisfied Judith a white man was at the oars. When within a hundred yards of the building the girls began to encircle it, in order to make sure that it was empty. No canoe was nigh, and this emboldened them to draw nearer and nearer, until they had gone round the piles and reached the platform.

"Do you go into the house, Hetty," said Judith, "and see that the savages are gone. They will not harm you, and if any of them are still here you can give me the alarm. I do not think they will fire on a poor defenceless girl, and I at least may escape, until I shall be ready to go among them of my own accord."

Hetty did as desired, Judith retiring a few yards from the platform the instant her sister landed, in readiness for flight. But the last was unnecessary, not a minute elapsing before Hetty returned to communicate that all was safe.

"I've been in all the rooms, Judith," said the latter earnestly, "and they are empty, except father's; he is in his own chamber, sleeping, though not as quietly as we could wish."

"Has any thing happened to father?" demanded Judith, as her foot touched the platform; speaking quickly, for her nerves were in a state to be easily alarmed.

Hetty seemed concerned, and she looked furtively about her as if unwilling any one but a child should hear what she had to communicate, and even that she should learn it abruptly.

"You know how it is with father sometimes, Judith," she said, "When overtaken with liquor he doesn't always know what he says or does, and he seems to be overtaken with liquor now."

"That is strange! Would the savages have drunk with him, and then leave him behind? But 'tis a grievous sight to a child, Hetty, to witness such a failing in a parent, and we will not go near him 'til he wakes."

A groan from the inner room, however, changed this resolution, and the girls ventured near a parent whom it was no unusual thing for them to find in a condition that lowers a man to the level of brutes. He was seated, reclining in a corner of the narrow room with his shoulders supported by the angle, and his head fallen heavily on his chest. Judith moved forward with a sudden impulse, and removed a canvass cap that was forced so low on his head as to conceal his face, and indeed all but his shoulders. The instant this obstacle was taken away, the quivering and raw flesh, the bared veins and muscles, and all the other disgusting signs of mortality, as they are revealed by tearing away the skin, showed he had been scalped, though still living.



## CHAPTER 21

*"Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,  
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him;  
But nothing he'll reck, if they'll let him sleep on,  
In the grave where a Briton has laid him."*

—CHARLES WOLFE, "THE BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE," VI.

The reader must imagine the horror that daughters would experience, at unexpectedly beholding the shocking spectacle that was placed before the eyes of Judith and Esther, as related in the close of the last chapter. We shall pass over the first emotions, the first acts of filial piety, and proceed with the narrative by imagining rather than relating most of the revolting features of the scene. The mutilated and ragged head was bound up, the unseemly blood was wiped from the face of the sufferer, the other appliances required by appearances and care were resorted to, and there was time to enquire into the more serious circumstances of the case. The facts were never known until years later in all their details, simple as they were, but they may as well be related here, as it can be done in a few words. In the struggle with the Hurons, Hutter had been stabbed by the knife of the old warrior, who had used the discretion to remove the arms of every one but himself. Being hard pushed by his sturdy foe, his knife had settled the matter. This occurred just as the door was opened, and Hurry burst out upon the platform, as has been previously related. This was the secret of neither party's having appeared in the subsequent struggle; Hutter having been literally disabled, and his conqueror being ashamed to be seen with the traces of blood about him, after having used so many injunctions to convince his young warriors of the necessity of taking their prisoners alive. When the three Hurons returned from the chase, and it was determined to abandon the castle and join the party on the land, Hutter was simply scalped to secure the usual trophy, and was left to die by inches, as has been done in a thousand similar instances by the ruthless warriors of this part of the American continent. Had the injury of Hutter been confined to his head, he might have recovered, however, for it was the blow of the knife that proved mortal. There are moments of vivid consciousness, when the stern justice of God stands forth in colours so prominent as to defy any attempts to veil them from the sight, however unpleasant they may appear, or however anxious we may be to avoid recognising it. Such was now the fact with Judith and Hetty, who both perceived the decrees of a retributive Providence, in the manner of their father's suffering, as a punishment for his own recent attempts on the Iroquois. This was seen and felt by Judith with the keenness of perception and sensibility that were suited to her character, while the impression made on the simpler mind of her sister was perhaps less lively, though it might well have proved more lasting.

"Oh! Judith," exclaimed the weak minded girl, as soon as their first care had been bestowed on sufferer. "Father went for scalps, himself, and now where is his own? The Bible might have foretold this dreadful punishment!"

"Hush, Hetty — hush, poor sister — He opens his eyes; he may hear and understand you. 'Tis as you say and think, but 'tis too dreadful to speak."

"Water," ejaculated Hutter, as it might be by a desperate effort, that rendered his voice frightfully deep and strong for one as near death as he evidently was — "Water — foolish girls — will you let me die of thirst?"

Water was brought and administered to the sufferer; the first he had tasted in hours of physical anguish. It had the double effect of clearing his throat and of momentarily reviving his sinking system. His eyes opened with that anxious, distended gaze which is apt to accompany the passage of a soul surprised by death, and he seemed disposed to speak.

"Father," said Judith, inexpressibly pained by his deplorable situation, and this so much the more from her ignorance of what remedies ought to be applied — "Father, can we do any thing for you? Can Hetty and I relieve your pain?"

"Father!" slowly repeated the old man. "No, Judith; no, Hetty — I'm no father. She was your mother, but I'm no father. Look in the chest — 'Tis all there — give me more water."

The girls complied, and Judith, whose early recollections extended farther back than her sister's, and who on every account had more distinct impressions of the past, felt an uncontrollable impulse of joy as she heard these words. There had never been much sympathy between her reputed father and herself, and suspicions of this very truth had often glanced across her mind, in consequence of dialogues she had overheard between Hutter and her mother. It might be going too far to say she had never loved him, but it is not so to add that she rejoiced it was no longer a duty. With Hetty the feeling was different. Incapable of making all the distinctions of her sister, her very nature was full of affection, and she had loved her

reputed parent, though far less tenderly than the real parent, and it grieved her now to hear him declare he was not naturally entitled to that love. She felt a double grief, as if his death and his words together were twice depriving her of parents. Yielding to her feelings, the poor girl went aside and wept.

The very opposite emotions of the two girls kept both silent for a long time. Judith gave water to the sufferer frequently, but she forbore to urge him with questions, in some measure out of consideration for his condition, but, if truth must be said, quite as much lest something he should add in the way of explanation might disturb her pleasing belief that she was not Thomas Hutter's child. At length Hetty dried her tears, and came and seated herself on a stool by the side of the dying man, who had been placed at his length on the floor, with his head supported by some coarse vestments that had been left in the house.

"Father," she said "you will let me call you father, though you say you are not one — Father, shall I read the Bible to you — mother always said the Bible was good for people in trouble. She was often in trouble herself, and then she made me read the Bible to her — for Judith wasn't as fond of the Bible as I am — and it always did her good. Many is the time I've known mother begin to listen with the tears streaming from her eyes, and end with smiles and gladness. Oh! father, you don't know how much good the Bible can do, for you've never tried it. Now, I'll read a chapter and it will soften your heart as it softened the hearts of the Hurons."

While poor Hetty had so much reverence for, and faith in, the virtues of the Bible, her intellect was too shallow to enable her fully to appreciate its beauties, or to fathom its profound and sometimes mysterious wisdom. That instinctive sense of right which appeared to shield her from the commission of wrong, and even cast a mantle of moral loveliness and truth around her character, could not penetrate abstrusities, or trace the nice affinities between cause and effect, beyond their more obvious and indisputable connection, though she seldom failed to see all the latter, and to defer to all their just consequences. In a word, she was one of those who feel and act correctly without being able to give a logical reason for it, even admitting revelation as her authority. Her selections from the Bible, therefore, were commonly distinguished by the simplicity of her own mind, and were oftener marked for containing images of known and palpable things than for any of the higher cast of moral truths with which the pages of that wonderful book abound — wonderful, and unequalled, even without referring to its divine origin, as a work replete with the profoundest philosophy, expressed in the noblest language. Her mother, with a connection that will probably strike the reader, had been fond of the book of Job, and Hetty had, in a great measure, learned to read by the frequent lessons she had received from the different chapters of this venerable and sublime poem — now believed to be the oldest book in the world. On this occasion the poor girl was submissive to her training, and she turned to that well known part of the sacred volume, with the readiness with which the practised counsel would cite his authorities from the stores of legal wisdom. In selecting the particular chapter, she was influenced by the caption, and she chose that which stands in our English version as "Job excuseth his desire of death." This she read steadily, from beginning to end, in a sweet, low and plaintive voice; hoping devoutly that the allegorical and abstruse sentences might convey to the heart of the sufferer the consolation he needed. It is another peculiarity of the comprehensive wisdom of the Bible that scarce a chapter, unless it be strictly narration, can be turned to, that does not contain some searching truth that is applicable to the condition of every human heart, as well as to the temporal state of its owner, either through the workings of that heart, or even in a still more direct form. In this instance, the very opening sentence — "Is there not an appointed time to man on earth?" was startling, and as Hetty proceeded, Hutter applied, or fancied he could apply many aphorisms and figures to his own worldly and mental condition. As life is ebbing fast, the mind clings eagerly to hope when it is not absolutely crushed by despair. The solemn words "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself," struck Hutter more perceptibly than the others, and, though too obscure for one of his blunted feelings and obtuse mind either to feel or to comprehend in their fullest extent, they had a directness of application to his own state that caused him to wince under them.

"Don't you feel better now, father?" asked Hetty, closing the volume. "Mother was always better when she had read the Bible."

"Water," returned Hutter — "give me water, Judith. I wonder if my tongue will always be so hot! Hetty, isn't there something in the Bible about cooling the tongue of a man who was burning in Hell fire?"

Judith turned away shocked, but Hetty eagerly sought the passage, which she read aloud to the conscience stricken victim of his own avaricious longings.

“That’s it, poor Hetty; yes, that’s it. My tongue wants cooling, now — what will it be hereafter?”

This appeal silenced even the confiding Hetty, for she had no answer ready for a confession so fraught with despair. Water, so long as it could relieve the sufferer, it was in the power of the sisters to give, and from time to time it was offered to the lips of the sufferer as he asked for it. Even Judith prayed. As for Hetty, as soon as she found that her efforts to make her father listen to her texts were no longer rewarded with success, she knelt at his side and devoutly repeated the words which the Saviour has left behind him as a model for human petitions. This she continued to do, at intervals, as long as it seemed to her that the act could benefit the dying man. Hutter, however, lingered longer than the girls had believed possible when they first found him. At times he spoke intelligibly, though his lips oftener moved in utterance of sounds that carried no distinct impressions to the mind. Judith listened intently, and she heard the words —“husband”—“death”—“pirate”—“law”—“scalps”— and several others of similar import, though there was no sentence to tell the precise connection in which they were used. Still they were sufficiently expressive to be understood by one whose ears had not escaped all the rumours that had been circulated to her reputed father’s discredit, and whose comprehension was as quick as her faculties were attentive.

During the whole of the painful hour that succeeded, neither of the sisters bethought her sufficiently of the Hurons to dread their return. It seemed as if their desolation and grief placed them above the danger of such an interruption, and when the sound of oars was at length heard, even Judith, who alone had any reason to apprehend the enemy, did not start, but at once understood that the Ark was near. She went upon the platform fearlessly, for should it turn out that Hurry was not there, and that the Hurons were masters of the scow also, escape was impossible. Then she had the sort of confidence that is inspired by extreme misery. But there was no cause for any new alarm, Chingachgook, Hist, and Hurry all standing in the open part of the scow, cautiously examining the building to make certain of the absence of the enemy. They, too, had seen the departure of the Hurons, as well as the approach of the canoe of the girls to the castle, and presuming on the latter fact, March had swept the scow up to the platform. A word sufficed to explain that there was nothing to be apprehended, and the Ark was soon moored in her old berth.

Judith said not a word concerning the condition of her father, but Hurry knew her too well not to understand that something was more than usually wrong. He led the way, though with less of his confident bold manner than usual, into the house, and penetrating to the inner room, found Hutter lying on his back with Hetty sitting at his side, fanning him with pious care. The events of the morning had sensibly changed the manner of Hurry. Notwithstanding his skill as a swimmer, and the readiness with which he had adopted the only expedient that could possibly save him, the helplessness of being in the water, bound hand and foot, had produced some such effect on him, as the near approach of punishment is known to produce on most criminals, leaving a vivid impression of the horrors of death upon his mind, and this too in connection with a picture of bodily helplessness; the daring of this man being far more the offspring of vast physical powers, than of the energy of the will, or even of natural spirit. Such heroes invariably lose a large portion of their courage with the failure of their strength, and though Hurry was now unfettered and as vigorous as ever, events were too recent to permit the recollection of his late deplorable condition to be at all weakened. Had he lived a century, the occurrences of the few momentous minutes during which he was in the lake would have produced a chastening effect on his character, if not always on his manner.

Hurry was not only shocked when he found his late associate in this desperate situation, but he was greatly surprised. During the struggle in the building, he had been far too much occupied himself to learn what had befallen his comrade, and, as no deadly weapon had been used in his particular case, but every effort had been made to capture him without injury, he naturally believed that Hutter had been overcome, while he owed his own escape to his great bodily strength, and to a fortunate concurrence of extraordinary circumstances. Death, in the silence and solemnity of a chamber, was a novelty to him. Though accustomed to scenes of violence, he had been unused to sit by the bedside and watch the slow beating of the pulse, as it gradually grew weaker and weaker. Notwithstanding the change in his feelings, the manners of a life could not be altogether cast aside in a moment, and the unexpected scene extorted a characteristic speech from the borderer.

“How now! old Tom,” he said, “have the vagabonds got you at an advantage, where you’re not only down, but are likely to be kept down! I thought you a captyve it’s true, but never supposed you so hard run as this!”

Hutter opened his glassy eyes, and stared wildly at the speaker. A flood of confused recollections rushed on his wavering mind at the sight of his late comrade. It was evident that he struggled with his own images, and knew not the real

from the unreal.

"Who are you?" he asked in a husky whisper, his failing strength refusing to aid him in a louder effort of his voice.

"Who are you? — You look like the mate of 'The Snow' — he was a giant, too, and near overcoming us."

"I'm your mate, Floating Tom, and your comrade, but have nothing to do with any snow. It's summer now, and Harry March always quits the hills as soon after the frosts set in, as is convenient."

"I know you — Hurry Skurry — I'll sell you a scalp! — a sound one, and of a full grown man — What'll you give?"

"Poor Tom! That scalp business hasn't turned out at all profitable, and I've pretty much concluded to give it up; and to follow a less bloody calling."

"Have you got any scalp? Mine's gone — How does it feel to have a scalp? I know how it feels to lose one — fire and flames about the brain — and a wrenching at the heart — no — no — kill first, Hurry, and scalp afterwards."

"What does the old fellow mean, Judith? He talks like one that is getting tired of the business as well as myself. Why have you bound up his head? or, have the savages tomahawked him about the brains?"

"They have done that for him which you and he, Harry March, would have so gladly done for them. His skin and hair have been torn from his head to gain money from the governor of Canada, as you would have torn theirs from the heads of the Hurons, to gain money from the Governor of York."

Judith spoke with a strong effort to appear composed, but it was neither in her nature, nor in the feeling of the moment to speak altogether without bitterness. The strength of her emphasis, indeed, as well as her manner, caused Hetty to look up reproachfully.

"These are high words to come from Thomas Hutter's darter, as Thomas Hutter lies dying before her eyes," retorted Hurry.

"God be praised for that! — whatever reproach it may bring on my poor mother, I am not Thomas Hutter's daughter."

"Not Thomas Hutter's darter! — Don't disown the old fellow in his last moments, Judith, for that's a sin the Lord will never overlook. If you're not Thomas Hutter's darter, whose darter be you?"

This question rebuked the rebellious spirit of Judith, for, in getting rid of a parent whom she felt it was a relief to find she might own she had never loved, she overlooked the important circumstance that no substitute was ready to supply his place.

"I cannot tell you, Harry, who my father was," she answered more mildly; "I hope he was an honest man, at least."

"Which is more than you think was the case with old Hutter? Well, Judith, I'll not deny that hard stories were in circulation consarning Floating Tom, but who is there that doesn't get a scratch, when an inimy holds the rake? There's them that say hard things of me, and even you, beauty as you be, don't always escape."

This was said with a view to set up a species of community of character between the parties, and as the politicians are wont to express it, with ulterior intentions. What might have been the consequences with one of Judith's known spirit, as well as her assured antipathy to the speaker, it is not easy to say, for, just then, Hutter gave unequivocal signs that his last moment was nigh. Judith and Hetty had stood by the dying bed of their mother, and neither needed a monitor to warn them of the crisis, and every sign of resentment vanished from the face of the first. Hutter opened his eyes, and even tried to feel about him with his hands, a sign that sight was failing. A minute later, his breathing grew ghastly; a pause totally without respiration followed; and, then, succeeded the last, long drawn sigh, on which the spirit is supposed to quit the body. This sudden termination of the life of one who had hitherto filled so important a place in the narrow scene on which he had been an actor, put an end to all discussion.

The day passed by without further interruption, the Hurons, though possessed of a canoe, appearing so far satisfied with their success as to have relinquished all immediate designs on the castle. It would not have been a safe undertaking, indeed, to approach it under the rifles of those it was now known to contain, and it is probable that the truce was more owing to this circumstance than to any other. In the mean while the preparations were made for the interment of Hutter. To bury him on the land was impracticable, and it was Hetty's wish that his body should lie by the side of that of her mother, in the lake. She had it in her power to quote one of his speeches, in which he himself had called the lake the "family burying ground," and luckily this was done without the knowledge of her sister, who would have opposed the plan, had she known it, with unconquerable disgust. But Judith had not meddled with the arrangement, and every necessary

disposition was made without her privity or advice.

The hour chosen for the rude ceremony was just as the sun was setting, and a moment and a scene more suited to paying the last offices to one of calm and pure spirit could not have been chosen. There are a mystery and a solemn dignity in death, that dispose the living to regard the remains of even a malefactor with a certain degree of reverence. All worldly distinctions have ceased; it is thought that the veil has been removed, and that the character and destiny of the departed are now as much beyond human opinions, as they are beyond human ken. In nothing is death more truly a leveller than in this, since, while it may be impossible absolutely to confound the great with the low, the worthy with the unworthy, the mind feels it to be arrogant to assume a right to judge of those who are believed to be standing at the judgment seat of God. When Judith was told that all was ready, she went upon the platform, passive to the request of her sister, and then she first took heed of the arrangement. The body was in the scow, enveloped in a sheet, and quite a hundred weight of stones, that had been taken from the fire place, were enclosed with it, in order that it might sink. No other preparation seemed to be thought necessary, though Hetty carried her Bible beneath her arm.

When all were on board the Ark, the singular habitation of the man whose body it now bore to its final abode, was set in motion. Hurry was at the oars. In his powerful hands, indeed, they seemed little more than a pair of sculls, which were wielded without effort, and, as he was expert in their use, the Delaware remained a passive spectator of the proceedings. The progress of the Ark had something of the stately solemnity of a funeral procession, the dip of the oars being measured, and the movement slow and steady. The wash of the water, as the blades rose and fell, kept time with the efforts of Hurry, and might have been likened to the measured tread of mourners. Then the tranquil scene was in beautiful accordance with a rite that ever associates with itself the idea of God. At that instant, the lake had not even a single ripple on its glassy surface, and the broad panorama of woods seemed to look down on the holy tranquillity of the hour and ceremony in melancholy stillness. Judith was affected to tears, and even Hurry, though he hardly knew why, was troubled. Hetty preserved the outward signs of tranquillity, but her inward grief greatly surpassed that of her sister, since her affectionate heart loved more from habit and long association, than from the usual connections of sentiment and taste. She was sustained by religious hope, however, which in her simple mind usually occupied the space that worldly feelings filled in that of Judith, and she was not without an expectation of witnessing some open manifestation of divine power, on an occasion so solemn. Still she was neither mystical nor exaggerated; her mental imbecility denying both. Nevertheless her thoughts had generally so much of the purity of a better world about them that it was easy for her to forget earth altogether, and to think only of heaven. Hist was serious, attentive and interested, for she had often seen the interments of the pale-faces, though never one that promised to be as peculiar as this; while the Delaware, though grave, and also observant, in his demeanor was stoical and calm.

Hetty acted as pilot, directing Hurry how to proceed, to find that spot in the lake which she was in the habit of terming "mother's grave." The reader will remember that the castle stood near the southern extremity of a shoal that extended near half a mile northerly, and it was at the farthest end of this shallow water that Floating Tom had seen fit to deposit the remains of his wife and child. His own were now in the course of being placed at their side. Hetty had marks on the land by which she usually found the spot, although the position of the buildings, the general direction of the shoal, and the beautiful transparency of the water all aided her, the latter even allowing the bottom to be seen. By these means the girl was enabled to note their progress, and at the proper time she approached March, whispering, "Now, Hurry you can stop rowing. We have passed the stone on the bottom, and mother's grave is near."

March ceased his efforts, immediately dropping the kedge and taking the warp in his hand in order to check the scow. The Ark turned slowly round under this restraint, and when it was quite stationary, Hetty was seen at its stern, pointing into the water, the tears streaming from her eyes, in ungovernable natural feeling. Judith had been present at the interment of her mother, but she had never visited the spot since. The neglect proceeded from no indifference to the memory of the deceased; for she had loved her mother, and bitterly had she found occasion to mourn her loss; but she was averse to the contemplation of death; and there had been passages in her own life since the day of that interment which increased this feeling, and rendered her, if possible, still more reluctant to approach the spot that contained the remains of one whose severe lessons of female morality and propriety had been deepened and rendered doubly impressive by remorse for her own failings. With Hetty, the case had been very different. To her simple and innocent mind, the remembrance of her mother brought no other feeling than one of gentle sorrow; a grief that is so often termed luxurious even, because it associates with itself the images of excellence and the purity of a better state of existence. For an entire summer, she had

been in the habit of repairing to the place after night-fall; and carefully anchoring her canoe so as not to disturb the body, she would sit and hold fancied conversations with the deceased, sing sweet hymns to the evening air, and repeat the orisons that the being who now slumbered below had taught her in infancy. Hetty had passed her happiest hours in this indirect communion with the spirit of her mother; the wildness of Indian traditions and Indian opinions, unconsciously to herself, mingling with the Christian lore received in childhood. Once she had even been so far influenced by the former as to have bethought her of performing some of those physical rites at her mother's grave which the redmen are known to observe; but the passing feeling had been obscured by the steady, though mild light of Christianity, which never ceased to burn in her gentle bosom. Now her emotions were merely the natural outpourings of a daughter that wept for a mother whose love was indelibly impressed on the heart, and whose lessons had been too earnestly taught to be easily forgotten by one who had so little temptation to err.

There was no other priest than nature at that wild and singular funeral rite. March cast his eyes below, and through the transparent medium of the clear water, which was almost as pure as air, he saw what Hetty was accustomed to call "mother's grave." It was a low, straggling mound of earth, fashioned by no spade, out of a corner of which gleamed a bit of the white cloth that formed the shroud of the dead. The body had been lowered to the bottom, and Hutter brought earth from the shore and let it fall upon it, until all was concealed. In this state the place had remained until the movement of the waters revealed the solitary sign of the uses of the spot that has just been mentioned.

Even the most rude and brawling are chastened by the ceremonies of a funeral. March felt no desire to indulge his voice in any of its coarse outbursts, and was disposed to complete the office he had undertaken in decent sobriety. Perhaps he reflected on the retribution that had alighted on his late comrade, and bethought him of the frightful jeopardy in which his own life had so lately been placed. He signified to Judith that all was ready, received her directions to proceed, and, with no other assistant than his own vast strength, raised the body and bore it to the end of the scow. Two parts of a rope were passed beneath the legs and shoulders, as they are placed beneath coffins, and then the corpse was slowly lowered beneath the surface of the lake.

"Not there — Harry March — no, not there," said Judith, shuddering involuntarily; "do not lower it quite so near the spot where mother lies!"

"Why not, Judith?" asked Hetty, earnestly. "They lived together in life, and should lie together in death."

"No — no — Harry March, further off — further off. Poor Hetty, you know not what you say. Leave me to order this."

"I know I am weak-minded, Judith, and that you are clever — but, surely a husband should be placed near a wife. Mother always said that this was the way they bury in Christian churchyards."

This little controversy was conducted earnestly, but in smothered voices, as if the speakers feared that the dead might overhear them. Judith could not contend with her sister at such a moment, but a significant gesture induced March to lower the body at a little distance from that of his wife; when he withdrew the cords, and the act was performed.

"There's an end of Floating Tom!" exclaimed Hurry, bending over the scow, and gazing through the water at the body. "He was a brave companion on a scout, and a notable hand with traps. Don't weep, Judith, don't be overcome, Hetty, for the righteousest of us all must die; and when the time comes, lamentations and tears can't bring the dead to life. Your father will be a loss to you, no doubt; most fathers are a loss, especially to onmarried darters; but there's a way to cure that evil, and you're both too young and handsome to live long without finding it out. When it's agreeable to hear what an honest and onpretending man has to say, Judith, I should like to talk a little with you, apart."

Judith had scarce attended to this rude attempt of Hurry's at consolation, although she necessarily understood its general drift, and had a tolerably accurate notion of its manner. She was weeping at the recollection of her mother's early tenderness, and painful images of long forgotten lessons and neglected precepts were crowding her mind. The words of Hurry, however, recalled her to the present time, and abrupt and unseasonable as was their import, they did not produce those signs of distaste that one might have expected from the girl's character. On the contrary, she appeared to be struck with some sudden idea, gazed intently for a moment at the young man, dried her eyes, and led the way to the other end of the scow, signifying her wish for him to follow. Here she took a seat and motioned for March to place himself at her side. The decision and earnestness with which all this was done a little intimidated her companion, and Judith found it necessary to open the subject herself.

"You wish to speak to me of marriage, Harry March," she said, "and I have come here, over the grave of my parents, as

it might be — no — no — over the grave of my poor, dear, dear, mother, to hear what you have to say.”

“This is uncommon, and you have a skearful way with you this evening, Judith,” answered Hurry, more disturbed than he would have cared to own, “but truth is truth, and it shall come out, let what will follow. You well know, gal, that I’ve long thought you the comeliest young woman my eyes ever beheld, and that I’ve made no secret of that fact, either here on the lake, out among the hunters and trappers, or in the settlements.”

“Yes — yes, I’ve heard this before, and I suppose it to be true,” answered Judith with a sort of feverish impatience.

“When a young man holds such language of any particular young woman, it’s reasonable to calculate he sets store by her.”

“True — true, Hurry — all this you’ve told me, again and again.”

“Well, if it’s agreeable, I should think a woman coul’n’t hear it too often. They all tell me this is the way with your sex, that nothing pleases them more than to repeat over and over, for the hundredth time, how much you like ’em, unless it be to talk to ’em of their good looks!”

“No doubt — we like both, on most occasions, but this is an uncommon moment, Hurry, and vain words should not be too freely used. I would rather hear you speak plainly.”

“You shall have your own way, Judith, and I some suspect you always will. I’ve often told you that I not only like you better than any other young woman going, or, for that matter, better than all the young women going, but you must have observed, Judith, that I’ve never asked you, in up and down tarms, to marry me.”

“I have observed both,” returned the girl, a smile struggling about her beautiful mouth, in spite of the singular and engrossing intentness which caused her cheeks to flush and lighted her eyes with a brilliancy that was almost dazzling — “I have observed both, and have thought the last remarkable for a man of Harry March’s decision and fearlessness.”

“There’s been a reason, gal, and it’s one that troubles me even now — nay, don’t flush up so, and look fiery like, for there are thoughts which will stick long in any man’s mind, as there be words that will stick in his throat — but, then ag’in, there’s feelin’s that will get the better of ’em all, and to these feelin’s I find I must submit. You’ve no longer a father, or a mother, Judith, and it’s morally impossible that you and Hetty could live here, alone, allowing it was peace and the Iroquois was quiet; but, as matters stand, not only would you starve, but you’d both be prisoners, or scalped, afore a week was out. It’s time to think of a change and a husband, and, if you’ll accept of me, all that’s past shall be forgotten, and there’s an end on’t.”

Judith had difficulty in repressing her impatience until this rude declaration and offer were made, which she evidently wished to hear, and which she now listened to with a willingness that might well have excited hope. She hardly allowed the young man to conclude, so eager was she to bring him to the point, and so ready to answer.

“There — Hurry — that’s enough,” she said, raising a hand as if to stop him — “I understand you as well as if you were to talk a month. You prefer me to other girls, and you wish me to become your wife.”

“You put it in better words than I can do, Judith, and I wish you to fancy them said just as you most like to hear ’em.”

“They’re plain enough, Harry, and ’tis fitting they should be so. This is no place to trifle or deceive in. Now, listen to my answer, which shall be, in every tittle, as sincere as your offer. There is a reason, March, why I should never —

“I suppose I understand you, Judith, but if I’m willing to overlook that reason, it’s no one’s consarn but mine — Now, don’t brighten up like the sky at sundown, for no offence is meant, and none should be taken.”

“I do not brighten up, and will not take offence,” said Judith, struggling to repress her indignation, in a way she had never found it necessary to exert before. “There is a reason why I should not, cannot, ever be your wife, Hurry, that you seem to overlook, and which it is my duty now to tell you, as plainly as you have asked me to consent to become so. I do not, and I am certain that I never shall, love you well enough to marry you. No man can wish for a wife who does not prefer him to all other men, and when I tell you this frankly, I suppose you yourself will thank me for my sincerity.”

“Ah! Judith, them flaunting, gay, scarlet-coated officers of the garrisons have done all this mischief!”

“Hush, March; do not calumniate a daughter over her mother’s grave! Do not, when I only wish to treat you fairly, give me reason to call for evil on your head in bitterness of heart! Do not forget that I am a woman, and that you are a man; and that I have neither father, nor brother, to revenge your words!”

“Well, there is something in the last, and I’ll say no more. Take time, Judith, and think better on this.”

"I want no time — my mind has long been made up, and I have only waited for you to speak plainly, to answer plainly. We now understand each other, and there is no use in saying any more."

The impetuous earnestness of the girl awed the young man, for never before had he seen her so serious and determined. In most, of their previous interviews she had met his advances with evasion or sarcasm, but these Hurry had mistaken for female coquetry, and had supposed might easily be converted into consent. The struggle had been with himself, about offering, nor had he ever seriously believed it possible that Judith would refuse to become the wife of the handsomest man on all that frontier. Now that the refusal came, and that in terms so decided as to put all cavilling out of the question; if not absolutely dumbfounded, he was so much mortified and surprised as to feel no wish to attempt to change her resolution.

"The Glimmerglass has now no great call for me," he exclaimed after a minute's silence. "Old Tom is gone, the Hurons are as plenty on the shore as pigeons in the woods, and altogether it is getting to be an unsuitable place."

"Then leave it. You see it is surrounded by dangers, and there is no reason why you should risk your life for others. Nor do I know that you can be of any service to us. Go, tonight; we'll never accuse you of having done any thing forgetful, or unmanly."

"If I do go, 'twill be with a heavy heart on your account, Judith; I would rather take you with me."

"That is not to be spoken of any longer, March; but, I will land you in one of the canoes, as soon as it is dark and you can strike a trail for the nearest garrison. When you reach the fort, if you send a party —"

Judith smothered the words, for she felt that it was humiliating to be thus exposing herself to the comments and reflections of one who was not disposed to view her conduct in connection with all in those garrisons, with an eye of favor. Hurry, however, caught the idea, and without perverting it, as the girl dreaded, he answered to the purpose.

"I understand what you would say, and why you don't say it," he replied. "If I get safe to the fort, a party shall start on the trail of these vagabonds, and I'll come with it, myself, for I should like to see you and Hetty in a place of safety, before we part forever."

"Ah, Harry March, had you always spoken thus, felt thus, my feelings towards you might have been different!"

"Is it too late, now, Judith? I'm rough and a woodsman, but we all change under different treatment from what we have been used to."

"It is too late, March. I can never feel towards you, or any other man but one, as you would wish to have me. There, I've said enough, surely, and you will question me no further. As soon as it is dark, I or the Delaware will put you on the shore. You will make the best of your way to the Mohawk, and the nearest garrison, and send all you can to our assistance. And, Hurry, we are now friends, and I may trust in you, may I not?"

"Sertain, Judith; though our fri'ndship would have been all the warmer, could you look upon me as I look upon you."

Judith hesitated, and some powerful emotion was struggling within her. Then, as if determined to look down all weaknesses, and accomplish her purposes at every hazard, she spoke more plainly.

"You will find a captain of the name of Warley at the nearest post," she said, pale as death, and even trembling as she spoke; "I think it likely he will wish to head the party, but I would greatly prefer it should be another. If Captain Warley can be kept back, 't would make me very happy!"

"That's easier said than done, Judith, for these officers do pretty much as they please. The Major will order, and captains, and lieutenants, and ensigns must obey. I know the officer you mean, a red faced, gay, oh! be joyful sort of a gentleman, who swallows madeira enough to drown the Mohawk, and yet a pleasant talker. All the gals in the valley admire him, and they say he admires all the gals. I don't wonder he is your dislike, Judith, for he's a very gin'ral lover, if he isn't a gin'ral officer."

Judith did not answer, though her frame shook, and her colour changed from pale to crimson, and from crimson back again to the hue of death.

"Alas! my poor mother!" she ejaculated mentally instead of uttering it aloud, "We are over thy grave, but little dost thou know how much thy lessons have been forgotten; thy care neglected; thy love defeated!"

As this goading of the worm that never dies was felt, she arose and signified to Hurry, that she had no more to communicate.



## CHAPTER 22

*"That point in misery, which makes the oppressed man regardless of his own life, makes him too Lord of the oppressor's."*

—COLERIDGE, REMORSE, V.I.201—04.

All this time Hetty had remained seated in the head of the scow, looking sorrowfully into the water which held the body of her mother, as well as that of the man whom she had been taught to consider her father. Hist stood near her in gentle quiet, but had no consolation to offer in words. The habits of her people taught her reserve in this respect, and the habits of her sex induced her to wait patiently for a moment when she might manifest some soothing sympathy by means of acts, rather than of speech. Chingachgook held himself a little aloof, in grave reserve, looking like a warrior, but feeling like a man.

Judith joined her sister with an air of dignity and solemnity it was not her practice to show, and, though the gleamings of anguish were still visible on her beautiful face, when she spoke it was firmly and without tremor. At that instant Hist and the Delaware withdrew, moving towards Hurry, in the other end of the boat.

"Sister," said Judith kindly, "I have much to say to you; we will get into this canoe, and paddle off to a distance from the Ark — The secrets of two orphans ought not to be heard by every ear."

"Certainly, Judith, by the ears of their parents? Let Hurry lift the grapnel and move away with the Ark, and leave us here, near the graves of father and mother, to say what we may have to say."

"Father!" repeated Judith slowly, the blood for the first time since her parting with March mounting to her cheeks — "He was no father of ours, Hetty! That we had from his own mouth, and in his dying moments."

"Are you glad, Judith, to find you had no father! He took care of us, and fed us, and clothed us, and loved us; a father could have done no more. I don't understand why he wasn't a father."

"Never mind, dear child, but let us do as you have said. It may be well to remain here, and let the Ark move a little away. Do you prepare the canoe, and I will tell Hurry and the Indians our wishes."

This was soon and simply done, the Ark moving with measured strokes of the sweeps a hundred yards from the spot, leaving the girls floating, seemingly in air, above the place of the dead; so buoyant was the light vessel that held them, and so limpid the element by which it was sustained.

"The death of Thomas Hutter," Judith commenced, after a short pause had prepared her sister to receive her communications, "has altered all our prospects, Hetty. If he was not our father, we are sisters, and must feel alike and live together."

"How do I know, Judith, that you wouldn't be as glad to find I am not your sister, as you are in finding that Thomas Hutter, as you call him, was not your father. I am only half witted, and few people like to have half witted relations; and then I'm not handsome — at least, not as handsome as you — and you may wish a handsomer sister."

"No, no Hetty. You and you only are my sister — my heart, and my love for you tell me that — and mother was my mother — of that too am I glad, and proud; for she was a mother to be proud of — but father was not father!"

"Hush, Judith! His spirit may be near; it would grieve it to hear his children talking so, and that, too, over his very grave. Children should never grieve parents, mother often told me, and especially when they are dead!"

"Poor Hetty! They are happily removed beyond all cares on our account. Nothing that I can do or say will cause mother any sorrow now — there is some consolation in that, at least! And nothing you can say or do will make her smile, as she used to smile on your good conduct when living."

"You don't know that, Judith. Spirits can see, and mother may see as well as any spirit. She always told us that God saw all we did, and that we should do nothing to offend him; and now she has left us, I strive to do nothing that can displease her. Think how her spirit would mourn and feel sorrow, Judith, did it see either of us doing what is not right; and spirits may see, after all; especially the spirits of parents that feel anxious about their children."

"Hetty — Hetty — you know not what you say!" murmured Judith, almost livid with emotion — "The dead cannot see, and know nothing of what passes here! But, we will not talk of this any longer. The bodies of Mother and Thomas Hutter lie together in the lake, and we will hope that the spirits of both are with God. That we, the children of one of them, remain

on earth is certain; it is now proper to know what we are to do in future."

"If we are not Thomas Hutter's children, Judith, no one will dispute our right to his property. We have the castle and the Ark, and the canoes, and the woods, and the lakes, the same as when he was living, and what can prevent us from staying here, and passing our lives just as we ever have done?"

"No, no poor sister — this can no longer be. Two girls would not be safe here, even should these Hurons fail in getting us into their power. Even father had as much as he could sometimes do, to keep peace upon the lake, and we should fail altogether. We must quit this spot, Hetty, and remove into the settlements."

"I am sorry you think so, Judith," returned Hetty, dropping her head on her bosom, and looking thoughtfully down at the spot where the funeral pile of her mother could just be seen. "I am very sorry to hear it. I would rather stay here, where, if I wasn't born, I've passed my life. I don't like the settlements — they are full of wickedness and heart burnings, while God dwells unoffended in these hills! I love the trees, and the mountains, and the lake, and the springs; all that his bounty has given us, and it would grieve me sorely, Judith, to be forced to quit them. You are handsome, and not at all half-witted, and one day you will marry, and then you will have a husband, and I a brother to take care of us, if women can't really take care of themselves in such a place as this."

"Ah! if this could be so, Hetty, then, indeed, I could now be a thousand times happier in these woods, than in the settlements. Once I did not feel thus, but now I do. Yet where is the man to turn this beautiful place into such a garden of Eden for us?"

"Harry March loves you, sister," returned poor Hetty, unconsciously picking the bark off the canoe as she spoke. "He would be glad to be your husband, I'm sure, and a stouter and a braver youth is not to be met with the whole country round."

"Harry March and I understand each other, and no more need be said about him. There is one — but no matter. It is all in the hands of providence, and we must shortly come to some conclusion about our future manner of living. Remain here — that is, remain here, alone, we cannot — and perhaps no occasion will ever offer for remaining in the manner you think of. It is time, too, Hetty, we should learn all we can concerning our relations and family. It is not probable we are altogether without relations, and they may be glad to see us. The old chest is now our property, and we have a right to look into it, and learn all we can by what it holds. Mother was so very different from Thomas Hutter, that, now I know we are not his children, I burn with a desire to know whose children we can be. There are papers in that chest, I am certain, and those papers may tell us all about our parents and natural friends."

"Well, Judith, you know best, for you are cleverer than common, mother always said, and I am only half-witted. Now father and mother are dead, I don't much care for any relation but you, and don't think I could love them I never saw, as well as I ought. If you don't like to marry Hurry, I don't see who you can choose for a husband, and then I fear we shall have to quit the lake, after all."

"What do you think of Deerslayer, Hetty?" asked Judith, bending forward like her unsophisticated sister, and endeavoring to conceal her embarrassment in a similar manner. "Would he not make a brother-in-law to your liking?"

"Deerslayer!" repeated the other, looking up in unfeigned surprise. "Why, Judith, Deerslayer isn't in the least comely, and is altogether unfit for one like you!"

"He is not ill-looking, Hetty, and beauty in a man is not of much matter."

"Do you think so, Judith? I know that beauty is of no great matter, in man or woman, in the eyes of God, for mother has often told me so, when she thought I might have been sorry I was not as handsome as you, though she needn't have been uneasy on that account, for I never coveted any thing that is yours, sister — but, tell me so she did — still, beauty is very pleasant to the eye, in both! I think, if I were a man, I should pine more for good looks than I do as a girl. A handsome man is a more pleasing sight than a handsome woman."

"Poor child! You scarce know what you say, or what you mean! Beauty in our sex is something, but in men, it passes for little. To be sure, a man ought to be tall, but others are tall, as well as Hurry; and active — and I think I know those that are more active — and strong; well, he hasn't all the strength in the world — and brave — I am certain I can name a youth who is braver!"

"This is strange, Judith! — I didn't think the earth held a handsomer, or a stronger, or a more active or a braver man than Hurry Harry! I'm sure I never met his equal in either of these things."

"Well, well, Hetty — say no more of this. I dislike to hear you talking in this manner. 'Tis not suitable to your innocence, and truth, and warm-hearted sincerity. Let Harry March go. He quits us tonight, and no regret of mine will follow him, unless it be that he has staid so long, and to so little purpose."

"Ah! Judith; that is what I've long feared — and I did so hope he might be my brother-in-law!"

"Never mind it now. Let us talk of our poor mother — and of Thomas Hutter."

"Speak kindly then, sister, for you can't be quite certain that spirits don't both hear and see. If father wasn't father, he was good to us, and gave us food and shelter. We can't put any stones over their graves, here in the water, to tell people all this, and so we ought to say it with our tongues."

"They will care little for that, girl. 'Tis a great consolation to know, Hetty, that if mother ever did commit any heavy fault when young, she lived sincerely to repent of it; no doubt her sins were forgiven her."

"Tisn't right, Judith, for children to talk of their parents' sins. We had better talk of our own."

"Talk of your sins, Hetty! — If there ever was a creature on earth without sin, it is you! I wish I could say, or think the same of myself; but we shall see. No one knows what changes affection for a good husband can make in a woman's heart. I don't think, child, I have even now the same love for finery I once had."

"It would be a pity, Judith, if you did think of clothes, over your parents' graves! We will never quit this spot, if you say so, and will let Hurry go where he pleases."

"I am willing enough to consent to the last, but cannot answer for the first, Hetty. We must live, in future, as becomes respectable young women, and cannot remain here, to be the talk and jest of all the rude and foul tongu'd trappers and hunters that may come upon the lake. Let Hurry go by himself, and then I'll find the means to see Deerslayer, when the future shall be soon settled. Come, girl, the sun has set, and the Ark is drifting away from us; let us paddle up to the scow, and consult with our friends. This night I shall look into the chest, and to-morrow shall determine what we are to do. As for the Hurons, now we can use our stores without fear of Thomas Hutter, they will be easily bought off. Let me get Deerslayer once out of their hands, and a single hour shall bring things to an understanding."

Judith spoke with decision, and she spoke with authority, a habit she had long practised towards her feeble-minded sister. But, while thus accustomed to have her way, by the aid of manner and a readier command of words, Hetty occasionally checked her impetuous feelings and hasty acts by the aid of those simple moral truths that were so deeply engrafted in all her own thoughts and feelings; shining through both with a mild and beautiful lustre that threw a sort of holy halo around so much of what she both said and did. On the present occasion, this healthful ascendancy of the girl of weak intellect, over her of a capacity that, in other situations, might have become brilliant and admired, was exhibited in the usual simple and earnest manner.

"You forget, Judith, what has brought us here," she said reproachfully. "This is mother's grave, and we have just laid the body of father by her side. We have done wrong to talk so much of ourselves at such a spot, and ought now to pray God to forgive us, and ask him to teach us where we are to go, and what we are to do."

Judith involuntarily laid aside her paddle, while Hetty dropped on her knees, and was soon lost in her devout but simple petitions. Her sister did not pray. This she had long ceased to do directly, though anguish of spirit frequently wrung from her mental and hasty appeals to the great source of benevolence, for support, if not for a change of spirit. Still she never beheld Hetty on her knees, that a feeling of tender recollection, as well as of profound regret at the deadness of her own heart, did not come over her. Thus had she herself done in childhood, and even down to the hour of her ill fated visits to the garrisons, and she would willingly have given worlds, at such moments, to be able to exchange her present sensations for the confiding faith, those pure aspirations, and the gentle hope that shone through every lineament and movement of her otherwise, less favored sister. All she could do, however, was to drop her head to her bosom, and assume in her attitude some of that devotion in which her stubborn spirit refused to unite. When Hetty rose from her knees, her countenance had a glow and serenity that rendered a face that was always agreeable, positively handsome. Her mind was at peace, and her conscience acquitted her of a neglect of duty.

"Now, you may go if you want to, Judith," she said, "for God has been kind to me, and lifted a burden off my heart. Mother had many such burdens, she used to tell me, and she always took them off in this way. 'Tis the only way, sister, such things can be done. You may raise a stone, or a log, with your hands; but the heart must be lightened by prayer. I don't think you pray as often as you used to do, when younger, Judith!"

"Never mind — never mind, child," answered the other huskily, "'tis no matter, now. Mother is gone, and Thomas Hutter is gone, and the time has come when we must think and act for ourselves."

As the canoe moved slowly away from the place, under the gentle impulsion of the elder sister's paddle, the younger sat musing, as was her wont whenever her mind was perplexed by any idea more abstract and difficult of comprehension than common.

"I don't know what you mean by 'future', Judith," she at length, suddenly observed. "Mother used to call Heaven the future, but you seem to think it means next week, or tomorrow!"

"It means both, dear sister — every thing that is yet to come, whether in this world or another. It is a solemn word, Hetty, and most so, I fear, to them that think the least about it. Mother's future is eternity; ours may yet mean what will happen while we live in this world — Is not that a canoe just passing behind the castle — here, more in the direction of the point, I mean; it is hid, now; but certainly I saw a canoe stealing behind the logs!"

"I've seen it some time," Hetty quietly answered, for the Indians had few terrors for her, "but I didn't think it right to talk about such things over mother's grave! The canoe came from the camp, Judith, and was paddled by a single man. He seemed to be Deerslayer, and no Iroquois."

"Deerslayer!" returned the other, with much of her native impetuosity—"That cannot be! Deerslayer is a prisoner, and I have been thinking of the means of setting him free. Why did you fancy it Deerslayer, child?"

"You can look for yourself, sister, for there comes the canoe in sight, again, on this side of the hut."

Sure enough, the light boat had passed the building, and was now steadily advancing towards the Ark; the persons on board of which were already collecting in the head of the scow to receive their visitor. A single glance sufficed to assure Judith that her sister was right, and that Deerslayer was alone in the canoe. His approach was so calm and leisurely, however, as to fill her with wonder, since a man who had effected his escape from enemies by either artifice or violence, would not be apt to move with the steadiness and deliberation with which his paddle swept the water. By this time the day was fairly departing, and objects were already seen dimly under the shores. In the broad lake, however, the light still lingered, and around the immediate scene of the present incidents, which was less shaded than most of the sheet, being in its broadest part, it cast a glow that bore some faint resemblance to the warm tints of an Italian or Grecian sunset. The logs of the hut and Ark had a sort of purple hue, blended with the growing obscurity, and the bark of the hunter's boat was losing its distinctness in colours richer, but more mellowed, than those it showed under a bright sun. As the two canoes approached each other — for Judith and her sister had plied their paddles so as to intercept the unexpected visitor ere he reached the Ark — even Deerslayer's sun-burned countenance wore a brighter aspect than common, under the pleasing tints that seemed to dance in the atmosphere. Judith fancied that delight at meeting her had some share in this unusual and agreeable expression. She was not aware that her own beauty appeared to more advantage than common, from the same natural cause, nor did she understand what it would have given her so much pleasure to know, that the young man actually thought her, as she drew nearer, the loveliest creature of her sex his eyes had ever dwelt on.

"Welcome — welcome, Deerslayer!" exclaimed the girl, as the canoes floated at each other's side; "we have had a melancholy — a frightful day — but your return is, at least, one misfortune the less! Have the Hurons become more human, and let you go; or have you escaped from the wretches, by your own courage and skill?"

"Neither, Judith — neither one nor t'other. The Mingos are Mingos still, and will live and die Mingos; it is not likely their natur's will ever undergo much improvement. Well! They've their gifts, and we've our'n, Judith, and it doesn't much become either to speak ill of what the Lord has created; though, if the truth must be said, I find it a sore trial to think kindly or to talk kindly of them vagabonds. As for outwitting them, that might have been done, and it was done, too, atween the Serpent, yonder, and me, when we were on the trail of Hist —" here the hunter stopped to laugh in his own silent fashion — "but it's no easy matter to sarcumvent the sarcumvented. Even the fa'ans get to know the tricks of the hunters afore a single season is over, and an Indian whose eyes have once been opened by a sarcumvention never shuts them ag'in in precisely the same spot. I've known whites to do that, but never a red-skin. What they l'arn comes by practice, and not by books, and of all schoolmasters exper'ence gives lessons that are the longest remembered."

"All this is true, Deerslayer, but if you have not escaped from the savages, how came you here?"

"That's a nat'ral question, and charmingly put. You are wonderful handsome this evening, Judith, or Wild Rose, as the Serpent calls you, and I may as well say it, since I honestly think it! You may well call them Mingos, savages too, for savage

enough do they feel, and savage enough will they act, if you once give them an opportunity. They feel their loss here, in the late skirmish, to their hearts' cores, and are ready to revenge it on any creature of English blood that may fall in their way. Nor, for that matter do I much think they would stand at taking their satisfaction out of a Dutch man."

"They have killed father; that ought to satisfy their wicked cravings for blood," observed Hetty reproachfully.

"I know it, gal — I know the whole story — partly from what I've seen from the shore, since they brought me up from the point, and partly from their threats against myself, and their other discourse. Well, life is uncertain at the best, and we all depend on the breath of our nostrils for it, from day to day. If you've lost a staunch friend, as I make no doubt you have, Providence will raise up new ones in his stead, and since our acquaintance has begun in this uncommon manner, I shall take it as a hint that it will be a part of my duty in future, should the occasion offer, to see you don't suffer for want of food in the wigwam. I can't bring the dead to life, but as to feeding the living, there's few on all this frontier can outdo me, though I say it in the way of pity and consolation, like, and in no particular, in the way of boasting."

"We understand you, Deerslayer," returned Judith, hastily, "and take all that falls from your lips, as it is meant, in kindness and friendship. Would to Heaven all men had tongues as true, and hearts as honest!"

"In that respect men do differ, of a certainty, Judith. I've known them that wasn't to be trusted any farther than you can see them; and others against whose messages, sent with a small piece of wampum, perhaps, might just as much be depended on, as if the whole business was finished afore your face. Yes, Judith, you never said truer word, than when you said some men might be depended on, and other some might not."

"You are an unaccountable being, Deerslayer," returned the girl, not a little puzzled with the childish simplicity of character that the hunter so often betrayed — a simplicity so striking that it frequently appeared to place him nearly on a level with the fatuity of poor Hetty, though always relieved by the beautiful moral truth that shone through all that this unfortunate girl both said and did — "You are a most unaccountable man, and I often do not know how to understand you. But never mind, just now; you have forgotten to tell us by what means you are here."

"I! — Oh! That's not very unaccountable, if I am myself, Judith. I'm out on furlough."

"Furlough! — That word has a meaning among the soldiers that I understand; but I cannot tell what it signifies when used by a prisoner."

"It means just the same. You're right enough; the soldiers do use it, and just in the same way as I use it. A furlough is when a man has leave to quit a camp or a garrison for a certain specified time; at the end of which he is to come back and shoulder his musket, or submit to his torments, just as he may happen to be a soldier, or a captive. Being the last, I must take the chances of a prisoner."

"Have the Hurons suffered you to quit them in this manner, without watch or guard?"

"Certain — I wouldn't have come in any other manner, unless indeed it had been by a bold rising, or a sarcumvention."

"What pledge have they that you will ever return?"

"My word," answered the hunter simply. "Yes, I own I gave 'em that, and big fools would they have been to let me come without it! Why in that case, I shouldn't have been obliged to go back and undergo any deviltries their fury may invent, but might have shouldered my rifle, and made the best of my way to the Delaware villages. But, Lord! Judith, they know'd this, just as well as you and I do, and would no more let me come away, without a promise to go back, than they would let the wolves dig up the bones of their fathers!"

"Is it possible you mean to do this act of extraordinary self-destruction and recklessness?"

"Anan!"

"I ask if it can be possible that you expect to be able to put yourself again in the power of such ruthless enemies, by keeping your word."

Deerslayer looked at his fair questioner for a moment with stern displeasure. Then the expression of his honest and guileless face suddenly changed, lighting as by a quick illumination of thought, after which he laughed in his ordinary manner.

"I didn't understand you, at first, Judith; no, I didn't! You believe that Chingachgook and Hurry Harry won't suffer it; but you don't know mankind thoroughly yet, I see. The Delaware would be the last man on earth to offer any objections to what he knows is a duty, and, as for March, he doesn't care enough about any creature but himself to spend many words on

such a subject. If he did, 'twould make no great difference howsoever; but not he, for he thinks more of his gains than of even his own word. As for my promises, or your'n, Judith, or any body else's, they give him no consarn. Don't be under any oneasiness, therefore, gal; I shall be allowed to go back according to the furlough; and if difficulties was made, I've not been brought up, and edicated as one may say, in the woods, without knowing how to look 'em down."

Judith made no answer for some little time. All her feelings as a woman, and as a woman who, for the first time in her life was beginning to submit to that sentiment which has so much influence on the happiness or misery of her sex, revolted at the cruel fate that she fancied Deerslayer was drawing down upon himself, while the sense of right, which God has implanted in every human breast, told her to admire an integrity as indomitable and as unpretending as that which the other so unconsciously displayed. Argument, she felt, would be useless, nor was she at that moment disposed to lessen the dignity and high principle that were so striking in the intentions of the hunter, by any attempt to turn him from his purpose. That something might yet occur to supersede the necessity for this self immolation she tried to hope, and then she proceeded to ascertain the facts in order that her own conduct might be regulated by her knowledge of circumstances.

"When is your furlough out, Deerslayer," she asked, after both canoes were heading towards the Ark, and moving, with scarcely a perceptible effort of the paddles, through the water.

"To-morrow noon; not a minute afore; and you may depend on it, Judith, I shan't quit what I call Christian company, to go and give myself up to them vagabonds, an instant sooner than is downright necessary. They begin to fear a visit from the garrisons, and wouldn't lengthen the time a moment, and it's pretty well understood atween us that, should I fail in my ar'n'd, the torments are to take place when the sun begins to fall, that they may strike upon their home trail as soon as it is dark."

This was said solemnly, as if the thought of what was believed to be in reserve duly weighed on the prisoner's mind, and yet so simply, and without a parade of suffering, as rather to repel than to invite any open manifestations of sympathy.

"Are they bent on revenging their losses?" Judith asked faintly, her own high spirit yielding to the influence of the other's quiet but dignified integrity of purpose.

"Downright, if I can judge of Indian inclinations by the symptoms. They think howsoever I don't suspect their designs, I do believe, but one that has lived so long among men of red-skin gifts, is no more likely to be misled in Injin feelin's, than a true hunter is like to lose his trail, or a stanch hound his scent. My own judgment is greatly ag'in my own escape, for I see the women are a good deal enraged on behalf of Hist, though I say it, perhaps, that shouldn't say it, seein' that I had a considerable hand myself in getting the gal off. Then there was a cruel murder in their camp last night, and that shot might just as well have been fired into my breast. Howsoever, come what will, the Serpent and his wife will be safe, and that is some happiness in any case."

"Oh! Deerslayer, they will think better of this, since they have given you until to-morrow noon to make up your mind!"

"I judge not, Judith; yes, I judge not. An Injin is an Injin, gal, and it's pretty much hopeless to think of swarving him, when he's got the scent and follows it with his nose in the air. The Delawares, now, are a half Christianized tribe — not that I think such sort of Christians much better than your whole blooded onbelievers — but, nevertheless, what good half Christianizing can do to a man, some among 'em have got, and yet revenge clings to their hearts like the wild creepers here to the tree! Then, I slew one of the best and boldest of their warriors, they say, and it is too much to expect that they should captivate the man who did this deed, in the very same scouting on which it was performed, and they take no account of the matter. Had a month, or so, gone by, their feelin's would have been softened down, and we might have met in a more friendly way, but it is as it is. Judith, this is talking of nothing but myself, and my own consarns, when you have had trouble enough, and may want to consult a fri'nd a little about your own matters. Is the old man laid in the water, where I should think his body would like to rest?"

"It is, Deerslayer," answered Judith, almost inaudibly. "That duty has just been performed. You are right in thinking that I wish to consult a friend; and that friend is yourself. Hurry Harry is about to leave us; when he is gone, and we have got a little over the feelings of this solemn office, I hope you will give me an hour alone. Hetty and I are at a loss what to do."

"That's quite nat'ral, coming as things have, suddenly and fearfully. But here's the Ark, and we'll say more of this when there is a better opportunity."

## CHAPTER 23

*"The winde is great upon the highest hilles;  
The quiet life is in the dale below;  
Who tread on ice shall slide against their willes;  
They want not cares, that curious arts should know.  
Who lives at ease and can content him so,  
Is perfect wise, and sets us all to schoole:  
Who hates this lore may well be called a foole."*

—THOMAS CHURCHYARD, "SHORE'S WIFE," XLVII.

The meeting between Deerslayer and his friends in the Ark was grave and anxious. The two Indians, in particular, read in his manner that he was not a successful fugitive, and a few sententious words sufficed to let them comprehend the nature of what their friend had termed his 'furlough.' Chingachgook immediately became thoughtful, while Hist, as usual, had no better mode of expressing her sympathy than by those little attentions which mark the affectionate manner of woman.

In a few minutes, however, something like a general plan for the proceedings of the night was adopted, and to the eye of an uninstructed observer things would be thought to move in their ordinary train. It was now getting to be dark, and it was decided to sweep the Ark up to the castle, and secure it in its ordinary berth. This decision was come to, in some measure on account of the fact that all the canoes were again in the possession of their proper owners, but principally, from the security that was created by the representations of Deerslayer. He had examined the state of things among the Hurons, and felt satisfied that they meditated no further hostilities during the night, the loss they had met having indisposed them to further exertions for the moment. Then, he had a proposition to make; the object of his visit; and, if this were accepted, the war would at once terminate between the parties; and it was improbable that the Hurons would anticipate the failure of a project on which their chiefs had apparently set their hearts, by having recourse to violence previously to the return of their messenger. As soon as the Ark was properly secured, the different members of the party occupied themselves in their several peculiar manners, haste in council, or in decision, no more characterizing the proceedings of these border whites, than it did those of their red neighbors. The women busied themselves in preparations for the evening meal, sad and silent, but ever attentive to the first wants of nature. Hurry set about repairing his moccasins, by the light of a blazing knot; Chingachgook seated himself in gloomy thought, while Deerslayer proceeded, in a manner equally free from affectation and concern, to examine 'Killdeer', the rifle of Hutter that has been already mentioned, and which subsequently became so celebrated, in the hands of the individual who was now making a survey of its merits. The piece was a little longer than usual, and had evidently been turned out from the work shops of some manufacturer of a superior order. It had a few silver ornaments, though, on the whole, it would have been deemed a plain piece by most frontier men, its great merit consisting in the accuracy of its bore, the perfection of the details, and the excellence of the metal. Again and again did the hunter apply the breech to his shoulder, and glance his eye along the sights, and as often did he poise his body and raise the weapon slowly, as if about to catch an aim at a deer, in order to try the weight, and to ascertain its fitness for quick and accurate firing. All this was done, by the aid of Hurry's torch, simply, but with an earnestness and abstraction that would have been found touching by any spectator who happened to know the real situation of the man.

"Tis a glorious we'pon, Hurry!" Deerslayer at length exclaimed, "and it may be thought a pity that it has fallen into the hands of women. The hunters have told me of its expl'ites, and by all I have heard, I should set it down as sartain death in exper'enced hands. Harken to the tick of this lock — a wolf trap has'n't a livelier spring; pan and cock speak together, like two singing masters undertaking a psalm in meetin'. I never did see so true a bore, Hurry, that's sartain!"

"Ay, Old Tom used to give the piece a character, though he wasn't the man to particularize the ra'al natur' of any sort of fire arms, in practise," returned March, passing the deer's thongs through the moccasin with the coolness of a cobbler. "He was no marksman, that we must all allow; but he had his good p'int, as well as his bad ones. I have had hopes that Judith might consait the idee of giving Killdeer to me."

"There's no saying what young women may do, that's a truth, Hurry, and I suppose you're as likely to own the rifle as another. Still, when things are so very near perfection, it's a pity not to reach it entirely."

"What do you mean by that? — Would not that piece look as well on my shoulder, as on any man's?"

"As for looks, I say nothing. You are both good-looking, and might make what is called a good-looking couple. But the true p'int is as to conduct. More deer would fall in one day, by that piece, in some man's hands, than would fall in a week in your'n, Hurry! I've seen you try; yes, remember the buck t'other day."

"That buck was out of season, and who wishes to kill venison out of season. I was merely trying to frighten the creatur', and I think you will own that he was pretty well skeared, at any rate."

"Well, well, have it as you say. But this is a lordly piece, and would make a steady hand and quick eye the King of the Woods!"

"Then keep it, Deerslayer, and become King of the Woods," said Judith, earnestly, who had heard the conversation, and whose eye was never long averted from the honest countenance of the hunter. "It can never be in better hands than it is, at this moment, and there I hope it will remain these fifty years."

"Judith you can't be in 'arnest!" exclaimed Deerslayer, taken so much by surprise, as to betray more emotion than it was usual for him to manifest on ordinary occasions. "Such a gift would be fit for a ra'al King to make; yes, and for a ra'al King to receive."

"I never was more in earnest, in my life, Deerslayer, and I am as much in earnest in the wish as in the gift."

"Well, gal, well; we'll find time to talk of this ag'in. You mustn't be down hearted, Hurry, for Judith is a sprightly young woman, and she has a quick reason; she knows that the credit of her father's rifle is safer in my hands, than it can possibly be in your'n; and, therefore, you mustn't be down hearted. In other matters, more to your liking, too, you'll find she'll give you the preference."

Hurry growled out his dissatisfaction, but he was too intent on quitting the lake, and in making his preparations, to waste his breath on a subject of this nature. Shortly after, the supper was ready, and it was eaten in silence as is so much the habit of those who consider the table as merely a place of animal refreshment. On this occasion, however, sadness and thought contributed their share to the general desire not to converse, for Deerslayer was so far an exception to the usages of men of his cast, as not only to wish to hold discourse on such occasions, but as often to create a similar desire in his companions.

The meal ended, and the humble preparations removed, the whole party assembled on the platform to hear the expected intelligence from Deerslayer on the subject of his visit. It had been evident he was in no haste to make his communication, but the feelings of Judith would no longer admit of delay. Stools were brought from the Ark and the hut, and the whole six placed themselves in a circle, near the door, watching each other's countenances, as best they could, by the scanty means that were furnished by a lovely star-light night. Along the shores, beneath the mountains, lay the usual body of gloom, but in the broad lake no shadow was cast, and a thousand mimic stars were dancing in the limpid element, that was just stirred enough by the evening air to set them all in motion.

"Now, Deerslayer," commenced Judith, whose impatience resisted further restraint—"now, Deerslayer, tell us all the Hurons have to say, and the reason why they have sent you on parole, to make us some offer."

"Furlough, Judith; furlough is the word; and it carries the same meaning with a captyve at large, as it does with a soldier who has leave to quit his colors. In both cases the word is passed to come back, and now I remember to have heard that's the ra'al signification; 'furlough' meaning a 'word' passed for the doing of any thing of the like. Parole I rather think is Dutch, and has something to do with the tattoos of the garrisons. But this makes no great difference, since the vartue of a pledge lies in the idee, and not in the word. Well, then, if the message must be given, it must; and perhaps there is no use in putting it off. Hurry will soon be wanting to set out on his journey to the river, and the stars rise and set, just as if they cared for neither Injin nor message. Ah's! me; 'Tisn't a pleasant, and I know it's a useless ar'n'd, but it must be told."

"Harkee, Deerslayer," put in Hurry, a little authoritatively—"You're a sensible man in a hunt, and as good a fellow on a march, as a sixty-miler-a-day could wish to meet with, but you're oncommon slow about messages; especially them that you think won't be likely to be well received. When a thing is to be told, why tell it; and don't hang back like a Yankee lawyer pretending he can't understand a Dutchman's English, just to get a double fee out of him."

"I understand you, Hurry, and well are you named to-night, seeing you've no time to lose. But let us come at once to the p'int, seeing that's the object of this council — for council it may be called, though women have seats among us. The simple fact is this. When the party came back from the castle, the Mingos held a council, and bitter thoughts were uppermost, as was plain to be seen by their gloomy faces. No one likes to be beaten, and a red-skin as little as a pale-face.



Well, when they had smoked upon it, and made their speeches, and their council fire had burnt low, the matter came out. It seems the elders among 'em consaited I was a man to be trusted on a furlough-They're wonderful obsarvant, them Mingos; that their worst mimics must allow — but they consaited I was such a man; and it isn't often —" added the hunter, with a pleasing consciousness that his previous life justified this implicit reliance on his good faith —"it isn't often they consait any thing so good of a pale-face; but so they did with me, and, therefore, they didn't hesitate to speak their minds, which is just this: You see the state of things. The lake, and all on it, they fancy, lie at their marcy. Thomas Hutter is deceased, and, as for Hurry, they've got the idee he has been near enough to death to-day, not to wish to take another look at him this summer. Therefore, they account all your forces as reduced to Chingachgook and the two young women, and, while they know the Delaware to be of a high race, and a born warrior, they know he's now on his first war path. As for the gals, of course they set them down much as they do women in gin'ral."

"You mean that they despise us!" interrupted Judith, with eyes that flashed so brightly as to be observed by all present.

"That will be seen in the end. They hold that all on the lake lies at their marcy, and, therefore, they send by me this belt of wampum," showing the article in question to the Delaware, as he spoke, "with these words. 'Tell the Sarpent, they say, that he has done well for a beginner; he may now strike across the mountains for his own villages, and no one shall look for his trail. If he has found a scalp, let him take it with him, for the Huron braves have hearts, and can feel for a young warrior who doesn't wish to go home empty-handed. If he is nimble, he is welcome to lead out a party in pursuit. Hist, however, must go back to the Hurons, for, when she left there in the night, she carried away by mistake, that which doesn't belong to her.'"

"That can't be true!" said Hetty earnestly. "Hist is no such girl, but one that gives every body his due —"

How much more she would have said in remonstrance cannot be known, inasmuch as Hist, partly laughing and partly hiding her face in shame, passed her own hand across the speaker's mouth in a way to check the words.

"You don't understand Mingo messages, poor Hetty —" resumed Deerslayer, "which seldom mean what lies exactly uppermost. Hist has brought away with her the inclinations of a young Huron, and they want her back again, that the poor young man may find them where he last saw them! The Sarpent they say is too promising a young warrior not to find as many wives as he wants, but this one he cannot have. That's their meaning, and nothing else, as I understand it."

"They are very obliging and thoughtful, in supposing a young woman can forget all her own inclinations in order to let this unhappy youth find his!" said Judith, ironically; though her manner became more bitter as she proceeded. "I suppose a woman is a woman, let her colour be white, or red, and your chiefs know little of a woman's heart, Deerslayer, if they think it can ever forgive when wronged, or ever forget when it fairly loves."

"I suppose that's pretty much the truth with some women, Judith, though I've known them that could do both. The next message is to you. They say the Muskrat, as they called your father, has dove to the bottom of the lake; that he will never come up again, and that his young will soon be in want of wigwams if not of food. The Huron huts, they think, are better than the huts of York, and they wish you to come and try them. Your colour is white, they own, but they think young women who've lived so long in the woods would lose their way in the clearin's. A great warrior among them has lately lost his wife, and he would be glad to put the Wild Rose on her bench at his fireside. As for the Feeble Mind, she will always be honored and taken care of by red warriors. Your father's goods they think ought to go to enrich the tribe, but your own property, which is to include everything of a female natur', will go like that of all wives, into the wigwam of the husband. Moreover, they've lost a young maiden by violence, lately, and 'twill take two pale-faces to fill her seat."

"And do you bring such a message to me," exclaimed Judith, though the tone in which the words were uttered had more in it of sorrow than of anger. "Am I a girl to be an Indian's slave?"

"If you wish my honest thoughts on this p'int, Judith, I shall answer that I don't think you'll, willingly, ever become any man's slave; red-skin or white. You're not to think hard, however, of my bringing the message, as near as I could, in the very words in which it was given to me. Them was the conditions on which I got my furlough, and a bargain is a bargain, though it is made with a vagabond. I've told you what they've said, but I've not yet told you what I think you ought, one and all, to answer."

"Ay; let's hear that, Deerslayer," put in Hurry. "My cur'osity is up on that consideration, and I should like, right well, to hear your idees of the reasonableness of the reply. For my part, though, my own mind is pretty much settled on the p'int of my own answer, which shall be made known as soon as necessary."

“And so is mine, Hurry, on all the different heads, and on no one is it more sartainly settled that on your’n. If I was you, I should say — ‘Deerslayer, tell them scamps they don’t know Harry March! He is human; and having a white skin, he has also a white natur’, which natur’ won’t let him desart females of his own race and gifts in their greatest need. So set me down as one that will refuse to come into your treaty, though you should smoke a hogshead of tobacco over it.”

March was a little embarrassed at this rebuke, which was uttered with sufficient warmth of manner, and with a point that left no doubt of the meaning. Had Judith encouraged him, he would not have hesitated about remaining to defend her and her sister, but under the circumstances a feeling of resentment rather urged him to abandon them. At all events, there was not a sufficiency of chivalry in Hurry Harry to induce him to hazard the safety of his own person unless he could see a direct connection between the probable consequences and his own interests. It is no wonder, therefore, that his answer partook equally of his intention, and of the reliance he so boastingly placed on his gigantic strength, which if it did not always make him outrageous, usually made him impudent, as respects those with whom he conversed.

“Fair words make long friendships, Master Deerslayer,” he said a little menacingly. “You’re but a stripling, and you know by exper’ence what you are in the hands of a man. As you’re not me, but only a go between sent by the savages to us Christians, you may tell your empl’yers that they do know Harry March, which is a proof of their sense as well as his. He’s human enough to follow human natur’, and that tells him to see the folly of one man’s fighting a whole tribe. If females desart him, they must expect to be desarted by him, whether they’re of his own gifts or another man’s gifts. Should Judith see fit to change her mind, she’s welcome to my company to the river, and Hetty with her; but shouldn’t she come to this conclusion, I start as soon as I think the enemy’s scouts are beginning to nestle themselves in among the brush and leaves for the night.”

“Judith will not change her mind, and she does not ask your company, Master March,” returned the girl with spirit.

“That p’int’s settled, then,” resumed Deerslayer, unmoved by the other’s warmth. “Hurry Harry must act for himself, and do that which will be most likely to suit his own fancy. The course he means to take will give him an easy race, if it don’t give him an easy conscience. Next comes the question with Hist — what say you gal? — Will you desart your duty, too, and go back to the Mingos and take a Huron husband, and all not for the love of the man you’re to marry, but for the love of your own scalp?”

“Why you talk so to Hist!” demanded the girl half-offended. “You t’ink a red-skin girl made like captain’s lady, to laugh and joke with any officer that come.”

“What I think, Hist, is neither here nor there in this matter. I must carry back your answer, and in order to do so it is necessary that you should send it. A faithful messenger gives his ar’n’d, word for word.”

Hist no longer hesitated to speak her mind fully. In the excitement she rose from her bench, and naturally recurring to that language in which she expressed herself the most readily, she delivered her thoughts and intentions, beautifully and with dignity, in the tongue of her own people.

“Tell the Hurons, Deerslayer,” she said, “that they are as ignorant as moles; they don’t know the wolf from the dog. Among my people, the rose dies on the stem where it budded, the tears of the child fall on the graves of its parents; the corn grows where the seed has been planted. The Delaware girls are not messengers to be sent, like belts of wampum, from tribe to tribe. They are honeysuckles, that are sweetest in their own woods; their own young men carry them away in their bosoms, because they are fragrant; they are sweetest when plucked from their native stems. Even the robin and the martin come back, year after year, to their old nests; shall a woman be less true hearted than a bird? Set the pine in the clay and it will turn yellow; the willow will not flourish on the hill; the tamarack is healthiest in the swamp; the tribes of the sea love best to hear the winds that blow over the salt water. As for a Huron youth, what is he to a maiden of the Lenni Lenape. He may be fleet, but her eyes do not follow him in the race; they look back towards the lodges of the Delawares. He may sing a sweet song for the girls of Canada, but there is no music for Wah, but in the tongue she has listened to from childhood. Were the Huron born of the people that once owned the shores of the salt lake, it would be in vain, unless he were of the family of Uncas. The young pine will rise to be as high as any of its fathers. Wah-ta-Wah has but one heart, and it can love but one husband.”

Deerslayer listened to this characteristic message, which was given with an earnestness suited to the feelings from which it sprung, with undisguised delight, meeting the ardent eloquence of the girl, as she concluded, with one of his own heartfelt, silent, and peculiar fits of laughter.

"That's worth all the wampum in the woods!" he exclaimed. "You don't understand it, I suppose, Judith, but if you'll look into your feelin's, and fancy that an inimy had sent to tell you to give up the man of your ch'ice, and to take up with another that wasn't the man of your ch'ice, you'll get the substance of it, I'll warrant! Give me a woman for ra'al eloquence, if they'll only make up their minds to speak what they feel. By speakin', I don't mean chatterin', howsever; for most of them will do that by the hour; but comm' out with their honest, deepest feelin's in proper words. And now, Judith, having got the answer of a red-skin girl, it is fit I should get that of a pale-face, if, indeed, a countenance that is as blooming as your'n can in any wise so be tarmed. You are well named the Wild Rose, and so far as colour goes, Hetty ought to be called the Honeysuckle."

"Did this language come from one of the garrison gallants, I should deride it, Deerslayer, but coming from you, I know it can be depended on," returned Judith, deeply gratified by his unmeditated and characteristic compliments. "It is too soon, however, to ask my answer; the Great Serpent has not yet spoken."

"The Serpent! Lord; I could carry back his speech without hearing a word of it! I didn't think of putting the question to him at all, I will allow; though 'twould be hardly right either, seeing that truth is truth, and I'm bound to tell these Mingos the fact and nothing else. So, Chingachgook, let us hear your mind on this matter — are you inclined to strike across the hills towards your village, to give up Hist to a Huron, and to tell the chiefs at home that, if they're actyve and successful, they may possibly get on the end of the Iroquois trail some two or three days a'ter the inimy has got off of it?"

Like his betrothed, the young chief arose, that his answer might be given with due distinctness and dignity. Hist had spoken with her hands crossed upon her bosom, as if to suppress the emotions within, but the warrior stretched an arm before him with a calm energy that aided in giving emphasis to his expressions. "Wampum should be sent for wampum," he said; "a message must be answered by a message. Hear what the Great Serpent of the Delawares has to say to the pretended wolves from the great lakes, that are howling through our woods. They are no wolves; they are dogs that have come to get their tails and ears cropped by the hands of the Delawares. They are good at stealing young women; bad at keeping them. Chingachgook takes his own where he finds it; he asks leave of no cur from the Canadas. If he has a tender feeling in his heart, it is no business of the Hurons. He tells it to her who most likes to know it; he will not bellow it in the forest, for the ears of those that only understand yells of terror. What passes in his lodge is not for the chiefs of his own people to know; still less for Mingo rogues —"

"Call 'em vagabonds, Sarpent —" interrupted Deerslayer, unable to restrain his delight — "yes, just call 'em up-and-down vagabonds, which is a word easily intarpreted, and the most hateful of all to their ears, it's so true. Never fear me; I'll give em your message, syllable for syllable, sneer for sneer, idee for idee, scorn for scorn, and they deserve no better at your hands — only call 'em vagabonds, once or twice, and that will set the sap mounting in 'em, from their lowest roots to the uppermost branches!"

"Still less for Mingo vagabonds," resumed Chingachgook, quite willingly complying with his friend's request. "Tell the Huron dogs to howl louder, if they wish a Delaware to find them in the woods, where they burrow like foxes, instead of hunting like warriors. When they had a Delaware maiden in their camp, there was a reason for hunting them up; now they will be forgotten unless they make a noise. Chingachgook don't like the trouble of going to his villages for more warriors; he can strike their run-a-way trail; unless they hide it under ground, he will follow it to Canada alone. He will keep Wah-ta-Wah with him to cook his game; they two will be Delawares enough to scare all the Hurons back to their own country."

"That's a grand despatch, as the officers call them things!" cried Deerslayer; "twill set all the Huron blood in motion; most particularly that part where he tells 'em Hist, too, will keep on their heels 'til they're fairly driven out of the country. Ahs! me; big words ain't always big deeds, notwithstanding! The Lord send that we be able to be only one half as good as we promise to be! And now, Judith, it's your turn to speak, for them miscreants will expect an answer from each person, poor Hetty, perhaps, excepted."

"And why not Hetty, Deerslayer? She often speaks to the purpose; the Indians may respect her words, for they feel for people in her condition."

"That is true, Judith, and quick-thoughted in you. The red-skins do respect misfortunes of all kinds, and Hetty's in particular. So, Hetty, if you have any thing to say, I'll carry it to the Hurons as faithfully as if it was spoken by a schoolmaster, or a missionary."

The girl hesitated a moment, and then she answered in her own gentle, soft tones, as earnestly as any who had

preceded her.

"The Hurons can't understand the difference between white people and themselves," she said, "or they wouldn't ask Judith and me to go and live in their villages. God has given one country to the red men and another to us. He meant us to live apart. Then mother always said that we should never dwell with any but Christians, if possible, and that is a reason why we can't go. This lake is ours, and we won't leave it. Father and mother's graves are in it, and even the worst Indians love to stay near the graves of their fathers. I will come and see them again, if they wish me to, and read more out of the Bible to them, but I can't quit father's and mother's graves."

"That will do — that will do, Hetty, just as well as if you sent them a message twice as long," interrupted the hunter. "I'll tell 'em all you've said, and all you mean, and I'll answer for it that they'll be easily satisfied. Now, Judith, your turn comes next, and then this part of my ar'n'd will be tarminated for the night."

Judith manifested a reluctance to give her reply, that had awakened a little curiosity in the messenger. Judging from her known spirit, he had never supposed the girl would be less true her feelings and principles than Hist, or Hetty, and yet there was a visible wavering of purpose that rendered him slightly uneasy. Even now when directly required to speak, she seemed to hesitate, nor did she open her lips until the profound silence told her how anxiously her words were expected. Then, indeed, she spoke, but it was doubtfully and with reluctance.

"Tell me, first — tell us, first, Deerslayer," she commenced, repeating the words merely to change the emphasis — "what effect will our answers have on your fate? If you are to be the sacrifice of our spirit, it would have been better had we all been more wary as to the language we use. What, then, are likely to be the consequences to yourself?"

"Lord, Judith, you might as well ask me which way the wind will blow next week, or what will be the age of the next deer that will be shot! I can only say that their faces look a little dark upon me, but it doesn't thunder every time a black cloud rises, nor does every puff of wind blow up rain. That's a question, therefore, much more easily put than answered."

"So is this message of the Iroquois to me," answered Judith rising, as if she had determined on her own course for the present. "My answer shall be given, Deerslayer, after you and I have talked together alone, when the others have laid themselves down for the night."

There was a decision in the manner of the girl that disposed Deerslayer to comply, and this he did the more readily as the delay could produce no material consequences one way or the other. The meeting now broke up, Hurry announcing his resolution to leave them speedily. During the hour that was suffered to intervene, in order that the darkness might deepen before the frontiersman took his departure, the different individuals occupied themselves in their customary modes, the hunter, in particular, passing most of the time in making further enquiries into the perfection of the rifle already mentioned.

The hour of nine soon arrived, however, and then it had been determined that Hurry should commence his journey. Instead of making his adieus frankly, and in a generous spirit, the little he thought it necessary to say was uttered sullenly and in coldness. Resentment at what he considered Judith's obstinacy was blended with mortification at the career he had since reaching the lake, and, as is usual with the vulgar and narrow-minded, he was more disposed to reproach others with his failures than to censure himself. Judith gave him her hand, but it was quite as much in gladness as with regret, while the two Delawares were not sorry to find he was leaving them. Of the whole party, Hetty alone betrayed any real feeling. Bashfulness, and the timidity of her sex and character, kept even her aloof, so that Hurry entered the canoe, where Deerslayer was already waiting for him, before she ventured near enough to be observed. Then, indeed, the girl came into the Ark and approached its end, just as the little bark was turning from it, with a movement so light and steady as to be almost imperceptible. An impulse of feeling now overcame her timidity, and Hetty spoke.

"Goodbye Hurry —" she called out, in her sweet voice — "goodbye, dear Hurry. Take care of yourself in the woods, and don't stop once, 'til you reach the garrison. The leaves on the trees are scarcely plentier than the Hurons round the lake, and they'll not treat a strong man like you as kindly as they treat me."

The ascendancy which March had obtained over this feeble-minded, but right-thinking, and right-feeling girl, arose from a law of nature. Her senses had been captivated by his personal advantages, and her moral communications with him had never been sufficiently intimate to counteract an effect that must have been otherwise lessened, even with one whose mind was as obtuse as her own. Hetty's instinct of right, if such a term can be applied to one who seemed taught by some kind spirit how to steer her course with unerring accuracy, between good and evil, would have revolted at Hurry's character

on a thousand points, had there been opportunities to enlighten her, but while he conversed and trifled with her sister, at a distance from herself, his perfection of form and feature had been left to produce their influence on her simple imagination and naturally tender feelings, without suffering by the alloy of his opinions and coarseness. It is true she found him rough and rude; but her father was that, and most of the other men she had seen, and that which she believed to belong to all of the sex struck her less unfavorably in Hurry's character than it might otherwise have done. Still, it was not absolutely love that Hetty felt for Hurry, nor do we wish so to portray it, but merely that awakening sensibility and admiration, which, under more propitious circumstances, and always supposing no untoward revelations of character on the part of the young man had supervened to prevent it, might soon have ripened into that engrossing feeling. She felt for him an incipient tenderness, but scarcely any passion. Perhaps the nearest approach to the latter that Hetty had manifested was to be seen in the sensitiveness which had caused her to detect March's predilection for her sister, for, among Judith's many admirers, this was the only instance in which the dull mind of the girl had been quickened into an observation of the circumstances.

Hurry received so little sympathy at his departure that the gentle tones of Hetty, as she thus called after him, sounded soothingly. He checked the canoe, and with one sweep of his powerful arm brought it back to the side of the Ark. This was more than Hetty, whose courage had risen with the departure of her hero, expected, and she now shrunk timidly back at this unexpected return.

"You're a good gal, Hetty, and I can't quit you without shaking hands," said March kindly. "Judith, a'ter all, isn't worth as much as you, though she may be a trifle better looking. As to wits, if honesty and fair dealing with a young man is a sign of sense in a young woman, you're worth a dozen Judiths; ay, and for that matter, most young women of my acquaintance."

"Don't say any thing against Judith, Harry," returned Hetty imploringly. "Father's gone, and mother's gone, and nobody's left but Judith and me, and it isn't right for sisters to speak evil, or to hear evil of each other. Father's in the lake, and so is mother, and we should all fear God, for we don't know when we may be in the lake, too."

"That sounds reasonable, child, as does most you say. Well, if we ever meet ag'in, Hetty, you'll find a fri'nd in me, let your sister do what she may. I was no great fri'nd of your mother I'll allow, for we didn't think alike on most p'int's, but then your father, Old Tom, and I, fitted each other as remarkably as a buckskin garment will fit any reasonable-built man. I've always been unanimous of opinion that Old Floating Tom Hutter, at the bottom, was a good fellow, and will maintain that ag'in all inimies for his sake, as well as for your'n."

"Goodbye, Hurry," said Hetty, who now wanted to hasten the young man off, as ardently as she had wished to keep him only the moment before, though she could give no clearer account of the latter than of the former feeling; "goodbye, Hurry; take care of yourself in the woods; don't halt 'til you reach the garrison. I'll read a chapter in the Bible for you before I go to bed, and think of you in my prayers."

This was touching a point on which March had no sympathies, and without more words, he shook the girl cordially by the hand and re-entered the canoe. In another minute the two adventurers were a hundred feet from the Ark, and half a dozen had not elapsed before they were completely lost to view. Hetty sighed deeply, and rejoined her sister and Hist.

For some time Deerslayer and his companion paddled ahead in silence. It had been determined to land Hurry at the precise point where he is represented, in the commencement of our tale, as having embarked, not only as a place little likely to be watched by the Hurons, but because he was sufficiently familiar with the signs of the woods, at that spot, to thread his way through them in the dark. Thither, then, the light craft proceeded, being urged as diligently and as swiftly as two vigorous and skilful canoemen could force their little vessel through, or rather over, the water. Less than a quarter of an hour sufficed for the object, and, at the end of that time, being within the shadows of the shore, and quite near the point they sought, each ceased his efforts in order to make their parting communications out of earshot of any straggler who might happen to be in the neighborhood.

"You will do well to persuade the officers at the garrison to lead out a party ag'in these vagabonds as soon as you git in, Hurry," Deerslayer commenced; "and you'll do better if you volunteer to guide it up yourself. You know the paths, and the shape of the lake, and the natur' of the land, and can do it better than a common, gin'ralizing scout. Strike at the Huron camp first, and follow the signs that will then show themselves. A few looks at the hut and the Ark will satisfy you as to the state of the Delaware and the women, and, at any rate, there'll be a fine opportunity to fall on the Mingo trail, and to make a mark on the memories of the blackguards that they'll be apt to carry with 'em a long time. It won't be likely to make much difference with me, since that matter will be detarmined afore tomorrow's sun has set, but it may make a great change in

Judith and Hetty's hopes and prospects!"

"And as for yourself, Nathaniel," Hurry enquired with more interest than he was accustomed to betray in the welfare of others — "And, as for yourself, what do you think is likely to turn up?"

"The Lord, in his wisdom, only can tell, Henry March! The clouds look black and threatening, and I keep my mind in a state to meet the worst. Vengeful feelin's are uppermost in the hearts of the Mingos, and any little disapp'intment about the plunder, or the prisoners, or Hist, may make the torments sartain. The Lord, in his wisdom, can only detarmine my fate, or your'n!"

"This is a black business, and ought to be put a stop to in some way or other —" answered Hurry, confounding the distinctions between right and wrong, as is usual with selfish and vulgar men. "I heartily wish old Hutter and I had scalped every creatur' in their camp, the night we first landed with that capital object! Had you not held back, Deerslayer, it might have been done, and then you wouldn't have found yourself, at the last moment, in the desperate condition you mention."

"'Twould have been better had you said you wished you had never attempted to do what it little becomes any white man's gifts to undertake; in which case, not only might we have kept from coming to blows, but Thomas Hutter would now have been living, and the hearts of the savages would be less given to vengeance. The death of that young woman, too, was on-called for, Henry March, and leaves a heavy load on our names if not on our consciences!"

This was so apparent, and it seemed so obvious to Hurry himself, at the moment, that he dashed his paddle into the water, and began to urge the canoe towards the shore, as if bent only on running away from his own lively remorse. His companion humoured this feverish desire for change, and, in a minute or two, the bows of the boat grated lightly on the shingle of the beach. To land, shoulder his pack and rifle, and to get ready for his march occupied Hurry but an instant, and with a growling adieu, he had already commenced his march, when a sudden twinge of feeling brought him to a dead stop, and immediately after to the other's side.

"You cannot mean to give yourself up ag'in to them murdering savages, Deerslayer!" he said, quite as much in angry remonstrance, as with generous feeling. "'Twould be the act of a madman or a fool!"

"There's them that thinks it madness to keep their words, and there's them that don't, Hurry Harry. You may be one of the first, but I'm one of the last. No red-skin breathing shall have it in his power to say that a Mingo minds his word more than a man of white blood and white gifts, in any thing that consarns me. I'm out on a furlough, and if I've strength and reason, I'll go in on a furlough afore noon to-morrow!"

"What's an Injin, or a word passed, or a furlough taken from creatur's like them, that have neither souls, nor reason!" "If they've got neither souls nor reason, you and I have both, Henry March, and one is accountable for the other. This furlough is not, as you seem to think, a matter altogether atween me and the Mingos, seeing it is a solemn bargain made atween me and God. He who thinks that he can say what he pleases, in his distress, and that twill all pass for nothing, because 'tis uttered in the forest, and into red men's ears, knows little of his situation, and hopes, and wants. The woods are but the ears of the Almighty, the air is his breath, and the light of the sun is little more than a glance of his eye. Farewell, Harry; we may not meet ag'in, but I would wish you never to treat a furlough, or any other solemn thing that your Christian God has been called on to witness, as a duty so light that it may be forgotten according to the wants of the body, or even accordin' to the cravings of the spirit." March was now glad again to escape. It was quite impossible that he could enter into the sentiments that ennobled his companion, and he broke away from both with an impatience that caused him secretly to curse the folly that could induce a man to rush, as it were, on his own destruction. Deerslayer, on the contrary, manifested no such excitement. Sustained by his principles, inflexible in the purpose of acting up to them, and superior to any unmanly apprehension, he regarded all before him as a matter of course, and no more thought of making any unworthy attempt to avoid it, than a Mussulman thinks of counteracting the decrees of Providence. He stood calmly on the shore, listening to the reckless tread with which Hurry betrayed his progress through the bushes, shook his head in dissatisfaction at the want of caution, and then stepped quietly into his canoe. Before he dropped the paddle again into the water, the young man gazed about him at the scene presented by the star-lit night. This was the spot where he had first laid his eyes on the beautiful sheet of water on which he floated. If it was then glorious in the bright light of a summer's noon-tide, it was now sad and melancholy under the shadows of night. The mountains rose around it like black barriers to exclude the outer world, and the gleams of pale light that rested on the broader parts of the basin were no bad symbols of the faintness of the hopes that were so dimly visible in his own future. Sighing heavily, he pushed the canoe from the land, and took his way back with steady diligence towards the Ark and the castle.

## CHAPTER 24

*"Thy secret pleasure turns to open shame;  
Thy private feasting to a public fast;  
Thy smoothing titles to a ragged name;  
Thy sugar'd tongue to bitter worm wood taste:  
Thy violent vanities can never last."*

—SHAKESPEARE, RAPE OF LUCRECE, 11. 890–94.

Judith was waiting the return of Deerslayer on the platform, with stifled impatience, when the latter reached the hut. Hist and Hetty were both in a deep sleep, on the bed usually occupied by the two daughters of the house, and the Delaware was stretched on the floor of the adjoining room, his rifle at his side, and a blanket over him, already dreaming of the events of the last few days. There was a lamp burning in the Ark, for the family was accustomed to indulge in this luxury on extraordinary occasions, and possessed the means, the vessel being of a form and material to render it probable it had once been an occupant of the chest.

As soon as the girl got a glimpse of the canoe, she ceased her hurried walk up and down the platform and stood ready to receive the young man, whose return she had now been anxiously expecting for some time. She helped him to fasten the canoe, and by aiding in the other little similar employments, manifested her desire to reach a moment of liberty as soon as possible. When this was done, in answer to an inquiry of his, she informed him of the manner in which their companions had disposed of themselves. He listened attentively, for the manner of the girl was so earnest and impressive as to apprise him that she had something on her mind of more than common concern.

"And now, Deerslayer," Judith continued, "you see I have lighted the lamp, and put it in the cabin of the Ark. That is never done with us, unless on great occasions, and I consider this night as the most important of my life. Will you follow me and see what I have to show you — hear what I have to say."

The hunter was a little surprised, but, making no objections, both were soon in the scow, and in the room that contained the light. Here two stools were placed at the side of the chest, with the lamp on another, and a table near by to receive the different articles as they might be brought to view. This arrangement had its rise in the feverish impatience of the girl, which could brook no delay that it was in her power to obviate. Even all the padlocks were removed, and it only remained to raise the heavy lid, again, to expose all the treasures of this long secreted hoard.

"I see, in part, what all this means," observed Deerslayer — "yes, I see through it, in part. But why is not Hetty present? Now Thomas Hutter is gone, she is one of the owners of these cur'osities, and ought to see them opened and handled."

"Hetty sleeps —" answered Judith, huskily. "Happily for her, fine clothes and riches have no charms. Besides she has this night given her share of all that the chest may hold to me, that I may do with it as I please."

"Is poor Hetty compass enough for that, Judith?" demanded the just-minded young man. "It's a good rule and a righteous one, never to take when them that give don't know the value of their gifts; and such as God has visited heavily in their wits ought to be dealt with as carefully as children that haven't yet come to their understandings."

Judith was hurt at this rebuke, coming from the person it did, but she would have felt it far more keenly had not her conscience fully acquitted her of any unjust intentions towards her feeble-minded but confiding sister. It was not a moment, however, to betray any of her usual mountings of the spirit, and she smothered the passing sensation in the desire to come to the great object she had in view.

"Hetty will not be wronged," she mildly answered; "she even knows not only what I am about to do, Deerslayer, but why I do it. So take your seat, raise the lid of the chest, and this time we will go to the bottom. I shall be disappointed if something is not found to tell us more of the history of Thomas Hutter and my mother."

"Why Thomas Hutter, Judith, and not your father? The dead ought to meet with as much reverence as the living!"

"I have long suspected that Thomas Hutter was not my father, though I did think he might have been Hetty's, but now we know he was the father of neither. He acknowledged that much in his dying moments. I am old enough to remember better things than we have seen on this lake, though they are so faintly impressed on my memory that the earlier part of my life seems like a dream."

"Dreams are but miserable guides when one has to determine about realities, Judith," returned the other

admonishingly. "Fancy nothing and hope nothing on their account, though I've known chiefs that thought 'em useful."

"I expect nothing for the future from them, my good friend, but cannot help remembering what has been. This is idle, however, when half an hour of examination may tell us all, or even more than I want to know."

Deerslayer, who comprehended the girl's impatience, now took his seat and proceeded once more to bring to light the different articles that the chest contained. As a matter of course, all that had been previously examined were found where they had been last deposited, and they excited much less interest or comment than when formerly exposed to view. Even Judith laid aside the rich brocade with an air of indifference, for she had a far higher aim before her than the indulgence of vanity, and was impatient to come at the still hidden, or rather unknown, treasures.

"All these we have seen before," she said, "and will not stop to open. The bundle under your hand, Deerslayer, is a fresh one; that we will look into. God send it may contain something to tell poor Hetty and myself who we really are!"

"Ay, if some bundles could speak, they might tell wonderful secrets," returned the young man deliberately undoing the folds of another piece of course canvass, in order to come at the contents of the roll that lay on his knees: "though this doesn't seem to be one of that family, seeing 'tis neither more nor less than a sort of flag, though of what nation, it passes my l'arnin' to say."

"That flag must have some meaning to it —" Judith hurriedly interposed. "Open it wider, Deerslayer, that we may see the colours."

"Well, I pity the ensign that has to shoulder this cloth, and to parade it about on the field. Why 'tis large enough, Judith, to make a dozen of them colours the King's officers set so much store by. These can be no ensign's colours, but a gin'ral's!"

"A ship might carry it, Deerslayer, and ships I know do use such things. Have you never heard any fearful stories about Thomas Hutter's having once been concerned with the people they call buccaneers?"

"Buck-ah-near! Not I— not I— I never heard him mentioned as good at a buck far off, or near by. Hurry Harry did tell me something about its being supposed that he had formerly, in some way or other, dealings with sartain sea robbers, but, Lord, Judith, it can't surely give you any satisfaction to make out that ag'in your mother's own husband, though he isn't your father."

"Anything will give me satisfaction that tells me who I am, and helps to explain the dreams of childhood. My mother's husband! Yes, he must have been that, though why a woman like her, should have chosen a man like him, is more than mortal reason can explain. You never saw mother, Deerslayer, and can't feel the vast, vast difference there was between them!"

"Such things do happen, howsever; — yes, they do happen; though why providence lets them come to pass is more than I understand. I've knew the fercest warriors with the gentlest wives of any in the tribe, and awful scolds fall to the lot of Injins fit to be missionaries."

"That was not it, Deerslayer; that was not it. Oh! if it should prove that — no; I cannot wish she should not have been his wife at all. That no daughter can wish for her own mother! Go on, now, and let us see what the square looking bundle holds."

Deerslayer complied, and he found that it contained a small trunk of pretty workmanship, but fastened. The next point was to find a key; but, search proving ineffectual, it was determined to force the lock. This Deerslayer soon effected by the aid of an iron instrument, and it was found that the interior was nearly filled with papers. Many were letters; some fragments of manuscripts, memorandums, accounts, and other similar documents. The hawk does not pounce upon the chicken with a more sudden swoop than Judith sprang forward to seize this mine of hitherto concealed knowledge. Her education, as the reader will have perceived, was far superior to her situation in life, and her eye glanced over page after page of the letters with a readiness that her schooling supplied, and with an avidity that found its origin in her feelings. At first it was evident that the girl was gratified; and we may add with reason, for the letters written by females, in innocence and affection, were of a character to cause her to feel proud of those with whom she had every reason to think she was closely connected by the ties of blood. It does not come within the scope of our plan to give more of these epistles, however, than a general idea of their contents, and this will best be done by describing the effect they produced on the manner, appearance, and feeling of her who was so eagerly perusing them.

It has been said, already, that Judith was much gratified with the letters that first met her eye. They contained the



correspondence of an affectionate and inteffigent mother to an absent daughter, with such allusions to the answers as served in a great measure to fill up the vacuum left by the replies. They were not without admonitions and warnings, however, and Judith felt the blood mounting to her temples, and a cold shudder succeeding, as she read one in which the propriety of the daughter's indulging in as much intimacy as had evidently been described in one of the daughter's own letters, with an officer "who came from Europe, and who could hardly be supposed to wish to form an honorable connection in America," was rather coldly commented on by the mother. What rendered it singular was the fact that the signatures had been carefully cut from every one of these letters, and wherever a name occurred in the body of the epistles it had been erased with so much diligence as to render it impossible to read it. They had all been enclosed in envelopes, according to the fashion of the age, and not an address either was to be found. Still the letters themselves had been religiously preserved, and Judith thought she could discover traces of tears remaining on several. She now remembered to have seen the little trunk in her mother's keeping, previously to her death, and she supposed it had first been deposited in the chest, along with the other forgotten or concealed objects, when the letters could no longer contribute to that parent's grief or happiness.

Next came another bundle, and these were filled with the protestations of love, written with passion certainly, but also with that deceit which men so often think it justifiable to use to the other sex. Judith had shed tears abundantly over the first packet, but now she felt a sentiment of indignation and pride better sustaining her. Her hand shook, however, and cold shivers again passed through her frame, as she discovered a few points of strong resemblance between these letters and some it had been her own fate to receive. Once, indeed, she laid the packet down, bowed her head to her knees, and seemed nearly convulsed. All this time Deerslayer sat a silent but attentive observer of every thing that passed. As Judith read a letter she put it into his hands to hold until she could peruse the next; but this served in no degree to enlighten her companion, as he was totally unable to read. Nevertheless he was not entirely at fault in discovering the passions that were contending in the bosom of the fair creature by his side, and, as occasional sentences escaped her in murmurs, he was nearer the truth, in his divinations, or conjectures, than the girl would have been pleased at discovering.

Judith had commenced with the earliest letters, luckily for a ready comprehension of the tale they told, for they were carefully arranged in chronological order, and to any one who would take the trouble to peruse them, would have revealed a sad history of gratified passion, coldness, and finally of aversion. As she obtained the clue to their import, her impatience would not admit of delay, and she soon got to glancing her eyes over a page by way of coming at the truth in the briefest manner possible. By adopting this expedient, one to which all who are eager to arrive at results without encumbering themselves with details are so apt to resort, Judith made a rapid progress in these melancholy revelations of her mother's failing and punishment. She saw that the period of her own birth was distinctly referred to, and even learned that the homely name she bore was given her by the father, of whose person she retained so faint an impression as to resemble a dream. This name was not obliterated from the text of the letters, but stood as if nothing was to be gained by erasing it. Hetty's birth was mentioned once, and in that instance the name was the mother's, but ere this period was reached came the signs of coldness, shadowing forth the desertion that was so soon to follow. It was in this stage of the correspondence that her mother had recourse to the plan of copying her own epistles. They were but few, but were eloquent with the feelings of blighted affection, and contrition. Judith sobbed over them, until again and again she felt compelled to lay them aside from sheer physical inability to see; her eyes being literally obscured with tears. Still she returned to the task, with increasing interest, and finally succeeded in reaching the end of the latest communication that had probably ever passed between her parents.

All this occupied fully an hour, for near a hundred letters were glanced at, and some twenty had been closely read. The truth now shone clear upon the acute mind of Judith, so far as her own birth and that of Hetty were concerned. She sickened at the conviction, and for the moment the rest of the world seemed to be cut off from her, and she had now additional reasons for wishing to pass the remainder of her life on the lake, where she had already seen so many bright and so many sorrowing days.

There yet remained more letters to examine. Judith found these were a correspondence between her mother and Thomas Hovey. The originals of both parties were carefully arranged, letter and answer, side by side; and they told the early history of the connection between the ill-assorted pair far more plainly than Judith wished to learn it. Her mother made the advances towards a marriage, to the surprise, not to say horror of her daughter, and she actually found a relief when she discovered traces of what struck her as insanity — or a morbid desperation, bordering on that dire calamity — in

the earlier letters of that ill-fated woman. The answers of Hovey were coarse and illiterate, though they manifested a sufficient desire to obtain the hand of a woman of singular personal attractions, and whose great error he was willing to overlook for the advantage of possessing one every way so much his superior, and who it also appeared was not altogether destitute of money. The remainder of this part of the correspondence was brief, and it was soon confined to a few communications on business, in which the miserable wife hastened the absent husband in his preparations to abandon a world which there was a sufficient reason to think was as dangerous to one of the parties as it was disagreeable to the other. But a sincere expression had escaped her mother, by which Judith could get a clue to the motives that had induced her to marry Hovey, or Hutter, and this she found was that feeling of resentment which so often tempts the injured to inflict wrongs on themselves by way of heaping coals on the heads of those through whom they have suffered. Judith had enough of the spirit of that mother to comprehend this sentiment, and for a moment did she see the exceeding folly which permitted such revengeful feelings to get the ascendancy.

There what may be called the historical part of the papers ceased. Among the loose fragments, however, was an old newspaper that contained a proclamation offering a reward for the apprehension of certain free-booters by name, among which was that of Thomas Hovey. The attention of the girl was drawn to the proclamation and to this particular name by the circumstance that black lines had been drawn under both, in ink. Nothing else was found among the papers that could lead to a discovery of either the name or the place of residence of the wife of Hutter. All the dates, signatures, and addresses had been cut from the letters, and wherever a word occurred in the body of the communications that might furnish a clue, it was scrupulously erased. Thus Judith found all her hopes of ascertaining who her parents were defeated, and she was obliged to fall back on her own resources and habits for everything connected with the future. Her recollection of her mother's manners, conversation, and sufferings filled up many a gap in the historical facts she had now discovered, and the truth, in its outlines, stood sufficiently distinct before her to take away all desire, indeed, to possess any more details. Throwing herself back in her seat, she simply desired her companion to finish the examination of the other articles in the chest, as it might yet contain something of importance.

"I'll do it, Judith; I'll do it," returned the patient Deerslayer, "but if there's many more letters to read, we shall see the sun ag'in afore you've got through with the reading of them! Two good hours have you been looking at them bits of papers!"

"They tell me of my parents, Deerslayer, and have settled my plans for life. A girl may be excused, who reads about her own father and mother, and that too for the first time in her life! I am sorry to have kept you waiting."

"Never mind me, gal; never mind me. It matters little whether I sleep or watch; but though you be pleasant to look at, and are so handsome, Judith, it is not altogether agreeable to sit so long to behold you shedding tears. I know that tears don't kill, and that some people are better for shedding a few now and then, especially young women; but I'd rather see you smile any time, Judith, than see you weep."

This gallant speech was rewarded with a sweet, though a melancholy smile; and then the girl again desired her companion to finish the examination of the chest. The search necessarily continued some time, during which Judith collected her thoughts and regained her composure. She took no part in the search, leaving everything to the young man, looking listlessly herself at the different articles that came uppermost. Nothing further of much interest or value, however, was found. A sword or two, such as were then worn by gentlemen, some buckles of silver, or so richly plated as to appear silver, and a few handsome articles of female dress, composed the principal discoveries. It struck both Judith and the Deerslayer, notwithstanding, that some of these things might be made useful in effecting a negotiation with the Iroquois, though the latter saw a difficulty in the way that was not so apparent to the former. The conversation was first renewed in connection with this point.

"And now, Deerslayer," said Judith, "we may talk of yourself, and of the means of getting you out of the hands of the Hurons. Any part, or all of what you have seen in the chest, will be cheerfully given by me and Hetty to set you at liberty."

"Well, that's gin'rous — yes, 'tis downright free-hearted, and free-handed, and gin'rous. This is the way with women; when they take up a fri'ndship, they do nothing by halves, but are as willing to part with their property as if it had no value in their eyes. However, while I thank you both, just as much as if the bargain was made, and Rivenoak, or any of the other vagabonds, was here to accept and close the treaty, there's two principal reasons why it can never come to pass, which may be as well told at once, in order no unlikely expectations may be raised in you, or any onjustifiable hopes in me."

"What reason can there be, if Hetty and I are willing to part with the trifles for your sake, and the savages are willing to receive them?"

"That's it, Judith; you've got the ideas, but they're a little out of their places, as if a hound should take the back'ard instead of the leading scent. That the Mingos will be willing to receive them things, or any more like 'em you may have to offer is probable enough, but whether they'll pay value for 'em is quite another matter. Ask yourself, Judith, if any one should send you a message to say that, for such or such a price, you and Hetty might have that chest and all it holds, whether you'd think it worth your while to waste many words on the bargain?"

"But this chest and all it holds, are already ours; there is no reason why we should purchase what is already our own."

"Just so the Mingos calculate! They say the chest is theirs, already; or, as good as theirs, and they'll not thank anybody for the key."

"I understand you, Deerslayer; surely we are yet in possession of the lake, and we can keep possession of it until Hurry sends troops to drive off the enemy. This we may certainly do provided you will stay with us, instead of going back and giving yourself up a prisoner, again, as you now seem determined on."

"That Hurry Harry should talk in thisaway, is natural, and according to the gifts of the man. He knows no better, and, therefore, he is little likely to feel or to act any better; but, Judith, I put it to your heart and conscience — would you, could you think of me as favorably, as I hope and believe you now do, was I to forget my furlough and not go back to the camp?"

"To think more favorably of you than I now do, Deerslayer, would not be easy; but I might continue to think as favorably — at least it seems so — I hope I could, for a world wouldn't tempt me to let you do anything that might change my real opinion of you."

"Then don't try to entice me to overlook my furlough, gal! A furlough is a sacred thing among warriors and men that carry their lives in their hands, as we of the forests do, and what a grievous disappointment would it be to old Tamenund, and to Uncas, the father of the Serpent, and to my other friends in the tribe, if I was so to disgrace myself on my very first war-path. This you will perceive, moreover, Judith, is without laying any stress on natural gifts, and a white man's duties, to say nothing of conscience. The last is king with me, and I try never to dispute his orders."

"I believe you are right, Deerslayer," returned the girl, after a little reflection and in a saddened voice: "a man like you ought not to act as the selfish and dishonest would be apt to act; you must, indeed, go back. We will talk no more of this, then. Should I persuade you to anything for which you would be sorry hereafter, my own regret would not be less than yours. You shall not have it to say, Judith — I scarce know by what name to call myself, now!"

"And why not? Why not, gal? Children take the names of their parents, naturally, and by a sort of gift, like, and why shouldn't you and Hetty do as others have done afore ye? Hutter was the old man's name, and Hutter should be the name of his darters; — at least until you are given away in lawful and holy wedlock."

"I am Judith, and Judith only," returned the girl positively — "until the law gives me a right to another name. Never will I use that of Thomas Hutter again; nor, with my consent, shall Hetty! Hutter was not even his own name, I find, but had he a thousand rights to it, it would give none to me. He was not my father, thank heaven; though I may have no reason to be proud of him that was!"

"This is strange!" said Deerslayer, looking steadily at the excited girl, anxious to know more, but unwilling to inquire into matters that did not properly concern him; "yes, this is very strange and uncommon! Thomas Hutter wasn't Thomas Hutter, and his darters weren't his darters! Who, then, could Thomas Hutter be, and who are his darters?"

"Did you never hear anything whispered against the former life of this person, Deerslayer?" demanded Judith "Passing, as I did, for his child, such reports reached even me."

"I'll not deny it, Judith; no, I'll not deny it. Certain things have been said, as I've told you, but I'm not very credible as to reports. Young as I am, I've lived long enough to learn there's two sorts of characters in the world — them that is 'arned by deeds, and them that is 'arned by tongues, and so I prefer to see and judge for myself, instead of letting every jaw that chooses to wag become my judgment. Hurry Harry spoke pretty plainly of the whole family, as we journeyed this-a-way, and he did hint something concerning Thomas Hutter's having been a free-liver on the water, in his younger days. By free-liver, I mean that he made free to live on other men's goods."

"He told you he was a pirate — there is no need of mincing matters between friends. Read that, Deerslayer, and you will see that he told you no more than the truth. This Thomas Hovey was the Thomas Hutter you knew, as is seen by these

letters.”

As Judith spoke, with a flushed cheek and eyes dazzling with the brilliancy of excitement, she held the newspaper towards her companion, pointing to the proclamation of a Colonial Governor, already mentioned.

“Bless you, Judith!” answered the other laughing, “you might as well ask me to print that — or, for that matter to write it. My education has been altogether in the woods; the only book I read, or care about reading, is the one which God has opened afore all his creatur’s in the noble forests, broad lakes, rolling rivers, blue skies, and the winds and tempests, and sunshine, and other glorious marvels of the land! This book I can read, and I find it full of wisdom and knowledge.”

“I crave your pardon, Deerslayer,” said Judith, earnestly, more abashed than was her wont, in finding that she had inadvertently made an appeal that might wound her companion’s pride. “I had forgotten your manner of life, and least of all did I wish to hurt your feelings.”

“Hurt my feelin’s? Why should it hurt my feelin’s to ask me to read, when I can’t read. I’m a hunter — and I may now begin to say a warrior, and no missionary, and therefore books and papers are of no account with such as I — No, no — Judith,” and here the young man laughed cordially, “not even for wads, seeing that your true deerkiller always uses the hide of a fa’a’n, if he’s got one, or some other bit of leather suitably prepared. There’s some that do say, all that stands in print is true, in which case I’ll own an unlearned man must be somewhat of a loser; nevertheless, it can’t be truer than that which God has printed with his own hand in the sky, and the woods, and the rivers, and the springs.”

“Well, then, Hutter, or Hovey, was a pirate, and being no father of mine, I cannot wish to call him one. His name shall no longer be my name.”

“If you dislike the name of that man, there’s the name of your mother, Judith. Her’n may sarve you just as good a turn.”

“I do not know it. I’ve look’d through those papers, Deerslayer, in the hope of finding some hint by which I might discover who my mother was, but there is no more trace of the past, in that respect, than the bird leaves in the air.”

“That’s both uncommon, and unreasonable. Parents are bound to give their offspring a name, even though they give ’em nothing else. Now I come of a humble stock, though we have white gifts and a white natur’, but we are not so poorly off as to have no name. Bumpo we are called, and I’ve heard it said —” a touch of human vanity glowing on his cheek, “that the time has been when the Bumppos had more standing and note among mankind than they have just now.”

“They never deserved them more, Deerslayer, and the name is a good one; either Hetty, or myself, would a thousand times rather be called Hetty Bumpo, or Judith Bumpo, than to be called Hetty or Judith Hutter.”

“That’s a moral impossible,” returned the hunter, good humouredly, “unless one of you should so far demean herself as to marry me.”

Judith could not refrain from smiling, when she found how simply and naturally the conversation had come round to the very point at which she had aimed to bring it. Although far from unfeminine or forward, either in her feelings or her habits, the girl was goaded by a sense of wrongs not altogether merited, incited by the hopelessness of a future that seemed to contain no resting place, and still more influenced by feelings that were as novel to her as they proved to be active and engrossing. The opening was too good, therefore, to be neglected, though she came to the subject with much of the indirectness and perhaps justifiable address of a woman.

“I do not think Hetty will ever marry, Deerslayer,” she said, “and if your name is to be borne by either of us, it must be borne by me.”

“There’s been handsome women too, they tell me, among the Bumppos, Judith, afore now, and should you take up with the name, uncommon as you be in this particular, them that knows the family won’t be altogether surprised.”

“This is not talking as becomes either of us, Deerslayer, for whatever is said on such a subject, between man and woman, should be said seriously and in sincerity of heart. Forgetting the shame that ought to keep girls silent until spoken to, in most cases, I will deal with you as frankly as I know one of your generous nature will most like to be dealt by. Can you — do you think, Deerslayer, that you could be happy with such a wife as a woman like myself would make?”

“A woman like you, Judith! But where’s the sense in trifling about such a thing? A woman like you, that is handsome enough to be a captain’s lady, and fine enough, and so far as I know educated enough, would be little apt to think of becoming my wife. I suppose young gals that feel themselves to be smart, and know themselves to be handsome, find a sartain satisfaction in passing their jokes ag’in them that’s neither, like a poor Delaware hunter.”

This was said good naturedly, but not without a betrayal of feeling which showed that something like mortified sensibility was blended with the reply. Nothing could have occurred more likely to awaken all Judith's generous regrets, or to aid her in her purpose, by adding the stimulant of a disinterested desire to atone to her other impulses, and cloaking all under a guise so winning and natural, as greatly to lessen the unpleasant feature of a forwardness unbecoming the sex.

"You do me injustice if you suppose I have any such thought, or wish," she answered, earnestly. "Never was I more serious in my life, or more willing to abide by any agreement that we may make to-night. I have had many suitors, Deerslayer — nay, scarce an unmarried trapper or hunter has been in at the Lake these four years, who has not offered to take me away with him, and I fear some that were married, too —"

"Ay, I'll warrant that!" interrupted the other — "I'll warrant all that! Take 'em as a body, Judith, 'arth don't hold a set of men more given to themselves, and less given to God and the law."

"Not one of them would I — could I listen to; happily for myself perhaps, has it been that such was the case. There have been well looking youths among them too, as you may have seen in your acquaintance, Henry March."

"Yes, Harry is sightly to the eye, though, to my idees, less so to the judgment. I thought, at first, you meant to have him, Judith, I did; but afore he went, it was easy enough to verify that the same lodge wouldn't be big enough for you both."

"You have done me justice in that at least, Deerslayer. Hurry is a man I could never marry, though he were ten times more comely to the eye, and a hundred times more stout of heart than he really is."

"Why not, Judith, why not? I own I'm cur'ous to know why a youth like Hurry shouldn't find favor with a maiden like you?"

"Then you shall know, Deerslayer," returned the girl, gladly availing herself of the opportunity of indirectly extolling the qualities which had so strongly interested her in her listener; hoping by these means covertly to approach the subject nearest her heart. "In the first place, looks in a man are of no importance with a woman, provided he is manly, and not disfigured, or deformed."

"There I can't altogether agree with you," returned the other thoughtfully, for he had a very humble opinion of his own personal appearance; "I have noticed that the comeliest warriors commonly get the best-looking maidens of the tribe for wives, and the Serpent, yonder, who is sometimes wonderful in his paint, is a general favorite with all the Delaware young women, though he takes to Hist, himself, as if she was the only beauty on 'arth!"

"It may be so with Indians; but it is different with white girls. So long as a young man has a straight and manly frame, that promises to make him able to protect a woman, and to keep want from the door, it is all they ask of the figure. Giants like Hurry may do for grenadiers, but are of little account as lovers. Then as to the face, an honest look, one that answers for the heart within, is of more value than any shape or colour, or eyes, or teeth, or trifles like them. The last may do for girls, but who thinks of them at all, in a hunter, or a warrior, or a husband? If there are women so silly, Judith is not among them."

"Well, this is wonderful! I always thought that handsome liked handsome, as riches love riches!"

"It may be so with you men, Deerslayer, but it is not always so with us women. We like stout-hearted men, but we wish to see them modest; sure on a hunt, or the war-path, ready to die for the right, and unwilling to yield to the wrong. Above all we wish for honesty — tongues that are not used to say what the mind does not mean, and hearts that feel a little for others, as well as for themselves. A true-hearted girl could die for such a husband! while the boaster, and the double-tongued suitor gets to be as hateful to the sight, as he is to the mind."

Judith spoke bitterly, and with her usual force, but her listener was too much struck with the novelty of the sensations he experienced to advert to her manner. There was something so soothing to the humility of a man of his temperament, to hear qualities that he could not but know he possessed himself, thus highly extolled by the loveliest female he had ever beheld, that, for the moment, his faculties seemed suspended in a natural and excusable pride. Then it was that the idea of the possibility of such a creature as Judith becoming his companion for life first crossed his mind. The image was so pleasant, and so novel, that he continued completely absorbed by it for more than a minute, totally regardless of the beautiful reality that was seated before him, watching the expression of his upright and truth-telling countenance with a keenness that gave her a very fair, if not an absolutely accurate clue to his thoughts. Never before had so pleasing a vision floated before the mind's eye of the young hunter, but, accustomed most to practical things, and little addicted to

submitting to the power of his imagination, even while possessed of so much true poetical feeling in connection with natural objects in particular, he soon recovered his reason, and smiled at his own weakness, as the fancied picture faded from his mental sight, and left him the simple, untaught, but highly moral being he was, seated in the Ark of Thomas Hutter, at midnight, with the lovely countenance of its late owner's reputed daughter, beaming on him with anxious scrutiny, by the light of the solitary lamp.

"You're wonderful handsome, and enticing, and pleasing to look on, Judith!" he exclaimed, in his simplicity, as fact resumed its ascendancy over fancy. "Wonderful! I don't remember ever to have seen so beautiful a gal, even among the Delawares; and I'm not astonished that Hurry Harry went away soured as well as disapp'inted!"

"Would you have had me, Deerslayer, become the wife of such a man as Henry March?"

"There's that which is in his favor, and there's that which is ag'in him. To my taste, Hurry wouldn't make the best of husbands, but I fear that the tastes of most young women, hereaway, wouldn't be so hard upon him."

"No — no — Judith without a name would never consent to be called Judith March! Anything would be better than that."

"Judith Bumpo wouldn't sound as well, gal; and there's many names that would fall short of March, in pleasing the ear."

"Ah! Deerslayer, the pleasantness of the sound, in such cases, doesn't come through the ear, but through the heart. Everything is agreeable, when the heart is satisfied. Were Natty Bumpo, Henry March, and Henry March, Natty Bumpo, I might think the name of March better than it is; or were he, you, I should fancy the name of Bumpo horrible!"

"That's just it — yes, that's the reason of the matter. Now, I'm nat'rally averse to serpents, and I hate even the word, which, the missionaries tell me, comes from human natur', on account of a sartain serpent at the creation of the 'arth, that outwitted the first woman; yet, ever since Chingachgook has 'arned the title he bears, why the sound is as pleasant to my ears as the whistle of the whippoorwill of a calm evening — it is. The feelin's make all the difference in the world, Judith, in the natur' of sounds; ay, even in that of looks, too."

"This is so true, Deerslayer, that I am surprised you should think it remarkable a girl, who may have some comeliness herself, should not think it necessary that her husband should have the same advantage, or what you fancy an advantage. To me, looks in a man is nothing provided his countenance be as honest as his heart."

"Yes, honesty is a great advantage, in the long run; and they that are the most apt to forget it in the beginning, are the most apt to l'arn it in the ind. Nevertheless, there's more, Judith, that look to present profit than to the benefit that is to come after a time. One they think a sartainty, and the other an onsartainty. I'm glad, howsoever, that you look at the thing in its true light, and not in the way in which so many is apt to deceive themselves."

"I do thus look at it, Deerslayer," returned the girl with emphasis, still shrinking with a woman's sensitiveness from a direct offer of her hand, "and can say, from the bottom of my heart, that I would rather trust my happiness to a man whose truth and feelings may be depended on, than to a false-tongued and false-hearted wretch that had chests of gold, and houses and lands — yes, though he were even seated on a throne!"

"These are brave words, Judith; they're downright brave words; but do you think that the feelin's would keep 'em company, did the ch'ice actually lie afore you? If a gay gallant in a scarlet coat stood on one side, with his head smelling like a deer's foot, his face smooth and blooming as your own, his hands as white and soft as if God hadn't bestowed 'em that man might live by the sweat of his brow, and his step as lofty as dancing-teachers and a light heart could make it; and the other side stood one that has passed his days in the open air till his forehead is as red as his cheek; had cut his way through swamps and bushes till his hand was as rugged as the oaks he slept under; had trodden on the scent of game till his step was as stealthy as the catamount's, and had no other pleasant odor about him than such as natur' gives in the free air and the forest — now, if both these men stood here, as suitors for your feelin's, which do you think would win your favor?"

Judith's fine face flushed, for the picture that her companion had so simply drawn of a gay officer of the garrisons had once been particularly grateful to her imagination, though experience and disappointment had not only chilled all her affections, but given them a backward current, and the passing image had a momentary influence on her feelings; but the mounting colour was succeeded by a paleness so deadly, as to make her appear ghastly.

"As God is my judge," the girl solemnly answered, "did both these men stand before me, as I may say one of them does, my choice, if I know my own heart, would be the latter. I have no wish for a husband who is any way better than myself."

"This is pleasant to listen to, and might lead a young man in time to forget his own onworthiness, Judith! However, you hardly think all that you say. A man like me is too rude and ignorant for one that has had such a mother to teach her. Vanity is nat'ral, I do believe, but vanity like that, would surpass reason."

"Then you do not know of what a woman's heart is capable! Rude you are not, Deerslayer, nor can one be called ignorant that has studied what is before his eyes as closely as you have done. When the affections are concerned, all things appear in their pleasantest colors, and trifles are overlooked, or are forgotten. When the heart feels sunshine, nothing is gloomy, even dull looking objects, seeming gay and bright, and so it would be between you and the woman who should love you, even though your wife might happen, in some matters, to possess what the world calls the advantage over you."

"Judith, you come of people altogether above mine, in the world, and onequal matches, like onequal fri'ndships can't often tarminate kindly. I speak of this matter altogether as a fanciful thing, since it's not very likely that you, at least, would be apt to treat it as a matter that can ever come to pass."

Judith fastened her deep blue eyes on the open, frank countenance of her companion, as if she would read his soul. Nothing there betrayed any covert meaning, and she was obliged to admit to herself, that he regarded the conversation as argumentative, rather than positive, and that he was still without any active suspicion that her feelings were seriously involved in the issue. At first, she felt offended; then she saw the injustice of making the self-abasement and modesty of the hunter a charge against him, and this novel difficulty gave a piquancy to the state of affairs that rather increased her interest in the young man. At that critical instant, a change of plan flashed on her mind, and with a readiness of invention that is peculiar to the quick-witted and ingenious, she adopted a scheme by which she hoped effectually to bind him to her person. This scheme partook equally of her fertility of invention, and of the decision and boldness of her character. That the conversation might not terminate too abruptly, however, or any suspicion of her design exist, she answered the last remark of Deerslayer, as earnestly and as truly as if her original intention remained unaltered.

"I, certainly, have no reason to boast of parentage, after what I have seen this night," said the girl, in a saddened voice. "I had a mother, it is true; but of her name even, I am ignorant — and, as for my father, it is better, perhaps, that I should never know who he was, lest I speak too bitterly of him!"

"Judith," said Deerslayer, taking her hand kindly, and with a manly sincerity that went directly to the girl's heart, "'tis better to say no more to-night. Sleep on what you've seen and felt; in the morning things that now look gloomy, may look more che'rful. Above all, never do anything in bitterness, or because you feel as if you'd like to take revenge on yourself for other people's backslidings. All that has been said or done atween us, this night, is your secret, and shall never be talked of by me, even with the Serpent, and you may be sartain if he can't get it out of me no man can. If your parents have been faulty, let the darter be less so; remember that you're young, and the youthful may always hope for better times; that you're more quick-witted than usual, and such gin'rally get the better of difficulties, and that, as for beauty, you're uncommon, which is an advantage with all. It is time to get a little rest, for to-morrow is like to prove a trying day to some of us."

Deerslayer arose as he spoke, and Judith had no choice but to comply. The chest was closed and secured, and they parted in silence, she to take her place by the side of Hist and Hetty, and he to seek a blanket on the floor of the cabin he was in. It was not five minutes ere the young man was in a deep sleep, but the girl continued awake for a long time. She scarce knew whether to lament, or to rejoice, at having failed in making herself understood. On the one hand were her womanly sensibilities spared; on the other was the disappointment of defeated, or at least of delayed expectations, and the uncertainty of a future that looked so dark. Then came the new resolution, and the bold project for the morrow, and when drowsiness finally shut her eyes, they closed on a scene of success and happiness, that was pictured by the fancy, under the influence of a sanguine temperament, and a happy invention.



## CHAPTER 25

*"But, mother, now a shade has past,  
Athwart my brightest visions here,  
A cloud of darkest gloom has wrapt,  
The remnant of my brief career!  
No song, no echo can I win,  
The sparkling fount has died within."*

—MARGARET DAVIDSON, "TO MY MOTHER," 11. 7–12.

Hist and Hetty arose with the return of light, leaving Judith still buried in sleep. It took but a minute for the first to complete her toilet. Her long coal-black hair was soon adjusted in a simple knot, the calico dress belted tight to her slender waist, and her little feet concealed in their gaudily ornamented moccasins. When attired, she left her companion employed in household affairs, and went herself on the platform to breathe the pure air of the morning. Here she found Chingachgook studying the shores of the lake, the mountains and the heavens, with the sagacity of a man of the woods, and the gravity of an Indian.

The meeting between the two lovers was simple, but affectionate. The chief showed a manly kindness, equally removed from boyish weakness and haste, while the girl betrayed, in her smile and half averted looks, the bashful tenderness of her sex. Neither spoke, unless it were with the eyes, though each understood the other as fully as if a vocabulary of words and protestations had been poured out. Hist seldom appeared to more advantage than at that moment, for just from her rest and ablutions, there was a freshness about her youthful form and face that the toils of the wood do not always permit to be exhibited, by even the juvenile and pretty. Then Judith had not only imparted some of her own skill in the toilet, during their short intercourse, but she had actually bestowed a few well selected ornaments from her own stores, that contributed not a little to set off the natural graces of the Indian maid. All this the lover saw and felt, and for a moment his countenance was illuminated with a look of pleasure, but it soon grew grave again, and became saddened and anxious. The stools used the previous night were still standing on the platform; placing two against the walls of the hut, he seated himself on one, making a gesture to his companion to take the other. This done, he continued thoughtful and silent for quite a minute, maintaining the reflecting dignity of one born to take his seat at the council-fire, while Hist was furtively watching the expression of his face, patient and submissive, as became a woman of her people. Then the young warrior stretched his arm before him, as if to point out the glories of the scene at that witching hour, when the whole panorama, as usual, was adorned by the mellow distinctness of early morning, sweeping with his hand slowly over lake, hills and heavens. The girl followed the movement with pleased wonder, smiling as each new beauty met her gaze.

"Hugh!" exclaimed the chief, in admiration of a scene so unusual even to him, for this was the first lake he had ever beheld. "This is the country of the Manitou! It is too good for Mingos, Hist; but the curs of that tribe are howling in packs through the woods. They think that the Delawares are asleep, over the mountains."

"All but one of them is, Chingachgook. There is one here; and he is of the blood of Uncas!"

"What is one warrior against a tribe? The path to our villages is very long and crooked, and we shall travel it under a cloudy sky. I am afraid, too, Honeysuckle of the Hills, that we shall travel it alone!"

Hist understood the allusion, and it made her sad; though it sounded sweet to her ears to be compared, by the warrior she so loved, to the most fragrant and the pleasantest of all the wild flowers of her native woods. Still she continued silent, as became her when the allusion was to a grave interest that men could best control, though it exceeded the power of education to conceal the smile that gratified feeling brought to her pretty mouth.

"When the sun is thus," continued the Delaware, pointing to the zenith, by simply casting upward a hand and finger, by a play of the wrist, "the great hunter of our tribe will go back to the Hurons to be treated like a bear, that they roast and skin even on full stomachs."

"The Great Spirit may soften their hearts, and not suffer them to be so bloody minded. I have lived among the Hurons, and know them. They have hearts, and will not forget their own children, should they fall into the hands of the Delawares."

"A wolf is forever howling; a hog will always eat. They have lost warriors; even their women will call out for vengeance. The pale-face has the eyes of an eagle, and can see into a Mingo's heart; he looks for no mercy. There is a cloud over his spirit, though it is not before his face."



A long, thoughtful pause succeeded, during which Hist stealthily took the hand of the chief, as if seeking his support, though she scarce ventured to raise her eyes to a countenance that was now literally becoming terrible, under the conflicting passions and stern resolution that were struggling in the breast of its owner.

"What will the Son of Uncas do?" the girl at length timidly asked. "He is a chief, and is already celebrated in council, though so young; what does his heart tell him is wisest; does the head, too, speak the same words as the heart?"

"What does Wah-ta-Wah say, at a moment when my dearest friend is in such danger. The smallest birds sing the sweetest; it is always pleasant to hearken to their songs. I wish I could hear the Wren of the Woods in my difficulty; its note would reach deeper than the ear."

Again Hist experienced the profound gratification that the language of praise can always awaken when uttered by those we love. The 'Honeysuckle of the Hills' was a term often applied to the girl by the young men of the Delawares, though it never sounded so sweet in her ears as from the lips of Chingachgook; but the latter alone had ever styled her the Wren of the Woods. With him, however, it had got to be a familiar phrase, and it was past expression pleasant to the listener, since it conveyed to her mind the idea that her advice and sentiments were as acceptable to her future husband, as the tones of her voice and modes of conveying them were agreeable; uniting the two things most prized by an Indian girl, as coming from her betrothed, admiration for a valued physical advantage, with respect for her opinion. She pressed the hand she held between both her own, and answered —

"Wah-ta-Wah says that neither she nor the Great Serpent could ever laugh again, or ever sleep without dreaming of the Hurons, should the Deerslayer die under a Mingo tomahawk, and they do nothing to save him. She would rather go back, and start on her long path alone, than let such a dark cloud pass before her happiness."

"Good! The husband and the wife will have but one heart; they will see with the same eyes, and feel with the same feelings."

What further was said need not be related here. That the conversation was of Deerslayer, and his hopes, has been seen already, but the decision that was come to will better appear in the course of the narrative. The youthful pair were yet conversing when the sun appeared above the tops of the pines, and the light of a brilliant American day streamed down into the valley, bathing "in deep joy" the lake, the forests and the mountain sides. Just at this instant Deerslayer came out of the cabin of the Ark and stepped upon the platform. His first look was at the cloudless heavens, then his rapid glance took in the entire panorama of land and water, when he had leisure for a friendly nod at his friends, and a cheerful smile for Hist.

"Well," he said, in his usual, composed manner, and pleasant voice, "he that sees the sun set in the west, and wakes 'arly enough in the morning will be sartain to find him coming back ag'in in the east, like a buck that is hunted round his ha'nt. I dare say, now, Hist, you've beheld this, time and ag'in, and yet it never entered into your galish mind to ask the reason?"

Both Chingachgook and his betrothed looked up at the luminary, with an air that betokened sudden wonder, and then they gazed at each other, as if to seek the solution of the difficulty. Familiarity deadens the sensibilities even as connected with the gravest natural phenomena, and never before had these simple beings thought of enquiring into a movement that was of daily occurrence, however puzzling it might appear on investigation. When the subject was thus suddenly started, it struck both alike, and at the same instant, with some such force, as any new and brilliant proposition in the natural sciences would strike the scholar. Chingachgook alone saw fit to answer.

"The pale-faces know everything," he said; "can they tell us why the sun hides his face, when he goes back, at night."

"Ay, that is downright red-skin l'arnin'" returned the other, laughing, though he was not altogether insensible to the pleasure of proving the superiority of his race by solving the difficulty, which he set about doing in his own peculiar manner. "Harkee, Serpent," he continued more gravely, though too simply for affectation; "this is easierly explained than an Indian brain may fancy. The sun, while he seems to keep traveling in the heavens, never budges, but it is the 'arth that turns round, and any one can understand, if he is placed on the side of a mill-wheel, for instance, when it's in motion, that he must some times see the heavens, while he is at other times under water. There's no great secret in that; but plain natur'; the difficulty being in setting the 'arth in motion."

"How does my brother know that the earth turns round?" demanded the Indian. "Can he see it?"

"Well, that's been a puzzler, I will own, Delaware, for I've often tried, but never could fairly make it out. Sometimes

I've consaited that I could; and then ag'in, I've been obliged to own it an onpossibility. Howsever, turn it does, as all my people say, and you ought to believe 'em, since they can foretell eclipses, and other prodigies, that used to fill the tribes with terror, according to your own traditions of such things."

"Good. This is true; no red man will deny it. When a wheel turns, my eyes can see it — they do not see the earth turn."

"Ay, that's what I call sense obstinacy! Seeing is believing, they say, and what they can't see, some men won't in the least give credit to. Nevertheless, chief, that isn't quite as good reason as it mayat first seem. You believe in the Great Spirit, I know, and yet, I conclude, it would puzzle you to show where you see him!"

"Chingachgook can see Him everywhere — everywhere in good things — the Evil Spirit in bad. Here, in the lake; there, in the forest; yonder, in the clouds; in Hist, in the Son of Uncas, in Tannemund, in Deerslayer. The Evil Spirit is in the Mingos. That I see; I do not see the earth turn round."

"I don't wonder they call you the Serpent, Delaware; no, I don't! There's always a meaning in your words, and there's often a meaning in your countenance, too! Notwithstanding, your answers doesn't quite meet my idee. That God is observable in all nat'ral objects is allowable, but then he is not perceptible in the way I mean. You know there is a Great Spirit by his works, and the pale-faces know that the 'arth turns round by its works. This is the reason of the matter, though how it is to be explained is more than I can exactly tell you. This I know; all my people consait that fact, and what all the pale-faces consait, is very likely to be true."

"When the sun is in the top of that pine to-morrow, where will my brother Deerslayer be?"

The hunter started, and he looked intently, though totally without alarm, at his friend. Then he signed for him to follow, and led the way into the Ark, where he might pursue the subject unheard by those whose feelings he feared might get the mastery over their reason. Here he stopped, and pursued the conversation in a more confidential tone.

"Twas a little onreasonable in you Serpent," he said, "to bring up such a subject afore Hist, and when the young women of my own colour might overhear what was said. Yes, 'twas a little more onreasonable than most things that you do. No matter; Hist didn't comprehend, and the other didn't hear. Howsever, the question is easier put than answered. No mortal can say where he will be when the sun rises tomorrow. I will ask you the same question, Serpent, and should like to hear what answer you can give."

"Chingachgook will be with his friend Deerslayer — if he be in the land of spirits, the Great Serpent will crawl at his side; if beneath yonder sun, its warmth and light shall fall on both."

"I understand you, Delaware," returned the other, touched with the simple self-devotion of his friend, "Such language is as plain in one tongue as in another. It comes from the heart, and goes to the heart, too. 'Tis well to think so, and it may be well to say so, for that matter, but it would not be well to do so, Serpent. You are no longer alone in life, for though you have the lodges to change, and other ceremonies to go through, afore Hist becomes your lawful wife, yet are you as good as married in all that bears on the feelin's, and joy, and misery. No — no — Hist must not be desarted, because a cloud is passing atween you and me, a little onexpectedly and a little darker than we may have looked for."

"Hist is a daughter of the Mohicans. She knows how to obey her husband. Where he goes, she will follow. Both will be with the Great Hunter of the Delawares, when the sun shall be in the pine to-morrow."

"The Lord bless and protect you! Chief, this is downright madness. Can either, or both of you, alter a Mingo natur'? Will your grand looks, or Hist's tears and beauty, change a wolf into a squirrel, or make a catamount as innocent as a fa'an? No — Serpent, you will think better of this matter, and leave me in the hands of God. A'ter all, it's by no means sartain that the scamps design the torments, for they may yet be pitiful, and bethink them of the wickedness of such a course — though it is but a hopeless expectation to look forward to a Mingo's turning aside from evil, and letting marcy get uppermost in his heart. Nevertheless, no one knows to a sartainty what will happen, and young creatur's, like Hist, a'n't to be risked on onsartainties. This marrying is altogether a different undertaking from what some young men fancy. Now, if you was single, or as good as single, Delaware, I should expect you to be actyve and stirring about the camp of the vagabonds, from sunrise to sunset, sarcumventing and contriving, as restless as a hound off the scent, and doing all manner of things to help me, and to distract the inimy, but two are oftener feebler than one, and we must take things as they are, and not as we want 'em to be."

"Listen, Deerslayer," returned the Indian with an emphasis so decided as to show how much he was in earnest. "If Chingachgook was in the hands of the Hurons, what would my pale-face brother do? Sneak off to the Delaware villages,

and say to the chiefs, and old men, and young warriors — ‘see, here is Wah-ta-Wah; she is safe, but a little tired; and here is the Son of Uncas, not as tired as the Honeysuckle, being stronger, but just as safe.’ Would he do this?”

“Well, that’s uncommon ingen’ous; it’s cunning enough for a Mingo, himself! The Lord only knows what put it into your head to ask such a question. What would I do? Why, in the first place, Hist wouldn’t be likely to be in my company at all, for she would stay as near you as possible, and therefore all that part about her couldn’t be said without talking nonsense. As for her being tired, that would fall through too, if she didn’t go, and no part of your speech would be likely to come from me; so, you see, Sarpent, reason is ag’in you, and you may as well give it up, since to hold out ag’in reason, is no way becoming a chief of your character and repitation.”

“My brother is not himself; he forgets that he is talking to one who has sat at the Council Fire of his nation,” returned the other kindly. “When men speak, they should say that which does not go in at one side of the head and out at the other. Their words shouldn’t be feathers, so light that a wind which does not ruffle the water can blow them away. He has not answered my question; when a chief puts a question, his friend should not talk of other things.”

“I understand you, Delaware; I understand well enough what you mean, and truth won’t allow me to say otherwise. Still it’s not as easy to answer as you seem to think, for this plain reason. You wish me to say what I would do if I had a betrothed as you have, here, on the lake, and a fri’nd yonder in the Huron camp, in danger of the torments. That’s it, isn’t it?”

The Indian bowed his head silently, and always with unmoved gravity, though his eye twinkled at the sight of the other’s embarrassment.

“Well, I never had a betrothed — never had the kind of feelin’s toward any young woman that you have towards Hist, though the Lord knows my feelin’s are kind enough towards ’em all! Still my heart, as they call it in such matters, isn’t touched, and therefore I can’t say what I would do. A fri’nd pulls strong, that I know by exper’ence, Sarpent, but, by all that I’ve seen and heard consarnin love, I’m led to think that a betrothed pulls stronger.”

“True; but the betrothed of Chingachgook does not pull towards the lodges of the Delawares; she pulls towards the camp of the Hurons.”

“She’s a noble gal, for all her little feet, and hands that an’t bigger than a child’s, and a voice that is as pleasant as a mocker’s; she’s a noble gal, and like the stock of her sires! Well, what is it, Sarpent; for I conclude she hasn’t changed her mind, and means to give herself up, and turn Huron wife. What is it you want?”

“Wah-ta-Wah will never live in the wigwam of an Iroquois,” answered the Delaware drily. “She has little feet, but they can carry her to the villages of her people; she has small hands, too, but her mind is large. My brother will see what we can do, when the time shall come, rather than let him die under Mingo torments.”

“Attempt nothing heedlessly, Delaware,” said the other earnestly; “I suppose you must and will have your way; and, on the whole it’s right you should, for you’d neither be happy, unless something was undertaken. But attempt nothing heedlessly — I didn’t expect you’d quit the lake, while my matter remained in unsartainty, but remember, Sarpent, that no torments that Mingo ingenuity can invent, no ta’ntings and revilings; no burnings and roastings and nail-tearings, nor any other onhuman contrivances can so soon break down my spirit, as to find that you and Hist have fallen into the power of the inimy in striving to do something for my good.”

“The Delawares are prudent. The Deerslayer will not find them running into a strange camp with their eyes shut.”

Here the dialogue terminated. Hetty announced that the breakfast was ready, and the whole party was soon seated around the simple board, in the usual primitive manner of borderers. Judith was the last to take her seat, pale, silent, and betraying in her countenance that she had passed a painful, if not a sleepless, night. At this meal scarce a syllable was exchanged, all the females manifesting want of appetites, though the two men were unchanged in this particular. It was early when the party arose, and there still remained several hours before it would be necessary for the prisoner to leave his friends. The knowledge of this circumstance, and the interest all felt in his welfare, induced the whole to assemble on the platform again, in the desire to be near the expected victim, to listen to his discourse, and if possible to show their interest in him by anticipating his wishes. Deerslayer, himself, so far as human eyes could penetrate, was wholly unmoved, conversing cheerfully and naturally, though he avoided any direct allusions to the expected and great event of the day. If any evidence could be discovered of his thought’s reverting to that painful subject at all, it was in the manner in which he spoke of death and the last great change.

"Grieve not, Hetty," he said, for it was while consoling this simple-minded girl for the loss of her parents that he thus betrayed his feelings, "since God has app'inted that all must die. Your parents, or them you fancied your parents, which is the same thing, have gone afore you; this is only in the order of natur', my good gal, for the aged go first, and the young follow. But one that had a mother like your'n, Hetty, can be at no loss to hope the best, as to how matters will turn out in another world. The Delaware, here, and Hist, believe in happy hunting grounds, and have idees befitting their notions and gifts as red-skins, but we who are of white blood hold altogether to a different doctrine. Still, I rather conclude our heaven is their land of spirits, and that the path which leads to it will be travelled by all colours alike. Tis onpossible for the wicked to enter on it, I will allow, but fri'nds can scarce be separated, though they are not of the same race on 'arth. Keep up your spirits, poor Hetty, and look forward to the day when you will meet your mother ag'in, and that without pain, or sorrowing."

"I do expect to see mother," returned the truth-telling and simple girl, "but what will become of father?"

"That's a non-plusser, Delaware," said the hunter, in the Indian dialect — "yes, that is a downright non-plusser! The Muskrat was not a saint on 'arth, and it's fair to guess he'll not be much of one, hereafter! Howsever, Hetty," dropping into the English by an easy transition, "howsever, Hetty, we must all hope for the best. That is wisest, and it is much the easiest to the mind, if one can only do it. I ricommend to you, trusting to God, and putting down all misgivings and fainthearted feelin's. It's wonderful, Judith, how different people have different notions about the futur', some fancying one change, and some fancying another. I've known white teachers that have thought all was spirit, hereafter, and them, ag'in, that believed the body will be transported to another world, much as the red-skins themselves imagine, and that we shall walk about in the flesh, and know each other, and talk together, and be fri'nds there as we've been fri'nds here."

"Which of these opinions is most pleasing to you, Deerslayer?" asked the girl, willing to indulge his melancholy mood, and far from being free from its influence herself. "Would it be disagreeable to think that you should meet all who are now on this platform in another world? Or have you known enough of us here, to be glad to see us no more."

"The last would make death a bitter portion; yes it would. It's eight good years since the Sarpent and I began to hunt together, and the thought that we were never to meet ag'in would be a hard thought to me. He looks forward to the time when he shall chase a sort of spirit-deer, in company, on plains where there's no thorns, or brambles, or marshes, or other hardships to overcome, whereas I can't fall into all these notions, seeing that they appear to be ag'in reason. Spirits can't eat, nor have they any use for clothes, and deer can only rightfully be chased to be slain, or slain, unless it be for the venison or the hides. Now, I find it hard to suppose that blessed spirits can be put to chasing game without an object, tormenting the dumb animals just for the pleasure and agreeableness of their own amusements. I never yet pulled a trigger on buck or doe, Judith, unless when food or clothes was wanting."

"The recollection of which, Deerslayer, must now be a great consolation to you."

"It is the thought of such things, my fri'nds, that enables a man to keep his furlough. It might be done without it, I own; for the worst red-skins sometimes do their duty in this matter; but it makes that which might otherwise be hard, easy, if not altogether to our liking. Nothing truly makes a bolder heart than a light conscience."

Judith turned paler than ever, but she struggled for self-command, and succeeded in obtaining it. The conflict had been severe, however, and it left her so little disposed to speak that Hetty pursued the subject. This was done in the simple manner natural to the girl.

"It would be cruel to kill the poor deer," she said, "in this world, or any other, when you don't want their venison, or their skins. No good white man, and no good red man would do it. But it's wicked for a Christian to talk about chasing anything in heaven. Such things are not done before the face of God, and the missionary that teaches these doctrines can't be a true missionary. He must be a wolf in sheep's clothing. I suppose you know what a sheep is, Deerslayer."

"That I do, gal, and a useful creatur' it is, to such as like cloths better than skins for winter garments. I understand the natur' of sheep, though I've had but little to do with 'em, and the natur' of wolves too, and can take the idee of a wolf in the fleece of a sheep, though I think it would be like to prove a hot jacket for such a beast, in the warm months!"

"And sin and hypocrisy are hot jackets, as they will find who put them on," returned Hetty, positively, "so the wolf would be no worse off than the sinner. Spirits don't hunt, nor trap, nor fish, nor do anything that vain men undertake, since they've none of the longings of this world to feed. Oh! Mother told me all that, years ago, and I don't wish to hear it denied."

“Well, my good Hetty, in that case you’d better not broach your doctrine to Hist, when she and you are alone, and the young Delaware maiden is inclined to talk religion. It’s her fixed idee, I know, that the good warriors do nothing but hunt and fish in the other world, though I don’t believe that she fancies any of them are brought down to trapping, which is no empl’yment for a brave. But of hunting and fishing, accordin’ to her notion, they’ve their fill, and that, too, over the most agreeablest hunting grounds, and among game that is never out of season, and which is just actyve and instinctyve enough to give a pleasure to death. So I wouldn’t ricommend it to you to start Hist on that idee.”

“Hist can’t be so wicked as to believe any such thing,” returned the other, earnestly. “No Indian hunts after he is dead.”

“No wicked Indian, I grant you; no wicked Indian, sartainly. He is obliged to carry the ammunion, and to look on without sharing in the sport, and to cook, and to light the fires, and to do every thing that isn’t manful. Now, mind; I don’t tell you these are my idees, but they are Hist’s idees, and, therefore, for the sake of peace the less you say to her ag’in ’em, the better.”

“And what are your ideas of the fate of an Indian, in the other world?” demanded Judith, who had just found her voice.

“Ah! gal, any thing but that! I am too Christianized to expect any thing so fanciful as hunting and fishing after death, nor do I believe there is one Manitou for the red-skin and another for a pale-face. You find different colours on ‘arth, as any one may see, but you don’t find different natur’s. Different gifts, but only one natur’.”

“In what is a gift different from a nature? Is not nature itself a gift from God?”

“Sartain; that’s quick-thoughted, and creditable, Judith, though the main idee is wrong. A natur’ is the creatur’ itself; its wishes, wants, idees and feelin’s, as all are born in him. This natur’ never can be changed, in the main, though it may undergo some increase, or lessening. Now, gifts come of sarcumstances. Thus, if you put a man in a town, he gets town gifts; in a settlement, settlement gifts; in a forest, gifts of the woods. A soldier has soldierly gifts, and a missionary preaching gifts. All these increase and strengthen, until they get to fortify natur’, as it might be, and excuse a thousand acts and idees. Still the creatur’ is the same at the bottom; just as a man who is clad in regimentals is the same as the man that is clad in skins. The garments make a change to the eye, and some change in the conduct, perhaps; but none in the man. Herein lies the apology for gifts; seein’ that you expect different conduct from one in silks and satins, from one in homespun; though the Lord, who didn’t make the dresses, but who made the creatur’s themselves, looks only at his own work. This isn’t ra’al missionary doctrine, but it’s as near it as a man of white colour need be. Ah’s! me; little did I think to be talking of such matters, to-day, but it’s one of our weaknesses never to know what will come to pass. Step into the Ark with me, Judith, for a minute; I wish to converse with you.”

Judith complied with a willingness she could scarce conceal. Following the hunter into the cabin, she took a seat on a stool, while the young man brought Killdeer, the rifle she had given him, out of a corner, and placed himself on another, with the weapon laid upon his knees. After turning the piece round and round, and examining its lock and its breech with a sort of affectionate assiduity, he laid it down and proceeded to the subject which had induced him to desire the interview.

“I understand you, Judith, to say that you gave me this rifle,” he said. “I agreed to take it, because a young woman can have no particular use for firearms. The we’pon has a great name, and it desarves it, and ought of right to be carried by some known and sure hand, for the best repitation may be lost by careless and thoughtless handling.”

“Can it be in better hands than those in which it is now, Deerslayer? Thomas Hutter seldom missed with it; with you it must turn out to be —”

“Sartain death!” interrupted the hunter, laughing. “I once know’d a beaver-man that had a piece he called by that very name, but ’twas all boastfulness, for I’ve seen Delawares that were as true with arrows, at a short range. Howsever, I’ll not deny my gifts — for this is a gift, Judith, and not natur’— but, I’ll not deny my gifts, and therefore allow that the rifle couldn’t well be in better hands than it is at present. But, how long will it be likely to remain there? Atween us, the truth may be said, though I shouldn’t like to have it known to the Serpent and Hist; but, to you the truth may be spoken, since your feelin’s will not be as likely to be tormented by it, as those of them that have known me longer and better. How long am I like to own this rifle or any other? That is a serious question for our thoughts to rest on, and should that happen which is so likely to happen, Killdeer would be without an owner.”

Judith listened with apparent composure, though the conflict within came near overpowering her. Appreciating the singular character of her companion, however, she succeeded in appearing calm, though, had not his attention been drawn exclusively to the rifle, a man of his keenness of observation could scarce have failed to detect the agony of mind with

which the girl had hearkened to his words. Her great self-command, notwithstanding, enabled her to pursue the subject in a way still to deceive him.

"What would you have me do with the weapon," she asked, "should that which you seem to expect take place?"

"That's just what I wanted to speak to you about, Judith; that's just it. There's Chingachgook, now, though far from being perfect sartainty, with a rifle — for few red-skins ever get to be that — though far from being perfect sartainty, he is respectable, and is coming on. Nevertheless, he is my fri'nd, and all the better fri'nd, perhaps, because there never can be any hard feelin's atween us, touchin' our gifts, his'n bein' red, and mine bein' altogether white. Now, I should like to leave Killdeer to the Sarpent, should any thing happen to keep me from doing credit and honor to your precious gift, Judith."

"Leave it to whom you please, Deerslayer. The rifle is your own, to do with as you please. Chingachgook shall have it, should you never return to claim it, if that be your wish."

"Has Hetty been consulted in this matter? Property goes from the parent to the children, and not to one child, in partic'lar!"

"If you place your right on that of the law, Deerslayer, I fear none of us can claim to be the owner. Thomas Hutter was no more the father of Esther, than he was the father of Judith. Judith and Esther we are truly, having no other name!"

"There may be law in that, but there's no great reason, gal. Accordin' to the custom of families, the goods are your'n, and there's no one here to gainsay it. If Hetty would only say that she is willing, my mind would be quite at ease in the matter. It's true, Judith, that your sister has neither your beauty, nor your wit; but we should be the tenderest of the rights and welfare of the most weak-minded."

The girl made no answer but placing herself at a window, she summoned her sister to her side. When the question was put to Hetty, that simple-minded and affectionate creature cheerfully assented to the proposal to confer on Deerslayer a full right of ownership to the much-coveted rifle. The latter now seemed perfectly happy, for the time being at least, and after again examining and re-examining his prize, he expressed a determination to put its merits to a practical test, before he left the spot. No boy could have been more eager to exhibit the qualities of his trumpet, or his crossbow, than this simple forester was to prove those of his rifle. Returning to the platform, he first took the Delaware aside, and informed him that this celebrated piece was to become his property, in the event of any thing serious befalling himself.

"This is a new reason why you should be wary, Sarpent, and not run into any oncalculated danger," the hunter added, "for, it will be a victory of itself to a tribe to own such a piece as this! The Mingos will turn green with envy, and, what is more, they will not ventur' heedlessly near a village where it is known to be kept. So, look well to it, Delaware, and remember that you've now to watch over a thing that has all the valie of a creatur', without its failin's. Hist may be, and should be precious to you, but Killdeer will have the love and veneration of your whole people."

"One rifle like another, Deerslayer," returned the Indian, in English, the language used by the other, a little hurt at his friend's lowering his betrothed to the level of a gun. "All kill; all wood and iron. Wife dear to heart; rifle good to shoot."

"And what is a man in the woods without something to shoot with?—a miserable trapper, or a forlorn broom and basket maker, at the best. Such a man may hoe corn, and keep soul and body together, but he can never know the savory morsels of venison, or tell a bear's ham from a hog's. Come, my fri'nd, such another occasion may never offer ag'in, and I feel a strong craving for a trial with this celebrated piece. You shall bring out your own rifle, and I will just sight Killdeer in a careless way, in order that we may know a few of its secret vartues."

As this proposition served to relieve the thoughts of the whole party, by giving them a new direction, while it was likely to produce no unpleasant results, every one was willing to enter into it; the girls bringing forth the firearms with an alacrity bordering on cheerfulness. Hutter's armory was well supplied, possessing several rifles, all of which were habitually kept loaded in readiness to meet any sudden demand for their use. On the present occasion it only remained to freshen the primings, and each piece was in a state for service. This was soon done, as all assisted in it, the females being as expert in this part of the system of defence as their male companions.

"Now, Sarpent, we'll begin in a humble way, using Old Tom's commoners first, and coming to your we'pon and Killdeer as the winding up observations," said Deerslayer, delighted to be again, weapon in hand, ready to display his skill. "Here's birds in abundance, some in, and some over the lake, and they keep at just a good range, hovering round the hut. Speak your mind, Delaware, and p'int out the creatur' you wish to alarm. Here's a diver nearest in, off to the eastward, and that's a creatur' that buries itself at the flash, and will be like enough to try both piece and powder."

Chingachgook was a man of few words. No sooner was the bird pointed out to him than he took his aim and fired. The duck dove at the flash, as had been expected, and the bullet skipped harmlessly along the surface of the lake, first striking the water within a few inches of the spot where the bird had so lately swam. Deerslayer laughed, cordially and naturally, but at the same time he threw himself into an attitude of preparation and stood keenly watching the sheet of placid water. Presently a dark spot appeared, and then the duck arose to breathe, and shook its wings. While in this act, a bullet passed directly through its breast, actually turning it over lifeless on its back. At the next moment, Deerslayer stood with the breech of his rifle on the platform, as tranquil as if nothing had happened, though laughing in his own peculiar manner.

"There's no great trial of the pieces in that!" he said, as if anxious to prevent a false impression of his own merit. "No, that proof's neither for nor ag'in the rifles, seeing it was all quickness of hand and eye. I took the bird at a disadvantage, or he might have got under, again, afore the bullet reached him. But the Sarpent is too wise to mind such tricks, having long been used to them. Do you remember the time, chief, when you thought yourself sartain of the wild-goose, and I took him out of your very eyes, as it might be with a little smoke! Howsever, such things pass for nothing atween fri'nds, and young folk will have their fun, Judith. Ay; here's just the bird we want, for it's as good for the fire, as it is for the aim, and nothing should be lost that can be turned to just account. There, further north, Delaware."

The latter looked in the required direction, and he soon saw a large black duck floating in stately repose on the water. At that distant day, when so few men were present to derange the harmony of the wilderness, all the smaller lakes with which the interior of New York so abounds were places of resort for the migratory aquatic birds, and this sheet like the others had once been much frequented by all the varieties of the duck, by the goose, the gull, and the loon. On the appearance of Hutter, the spot was comparatively deserted for other sheets, more retired and remote, though some of each species continued to resort thither, as indeed they do to the present hour. At that instant, a hundred birds were visible from the castle, sleeping on the water or laying their feathers in the limpid element, though no other offered so favorable a mark as that Deerslayer had just pointed out to his friend. Chingachgook, as usual, spared his words, and proceeded to execution. This time his aim was more careful than before, and his success in proportion. The bird had a wing crippled, and fluttered along the water screaming, materially increasing its distance from its enemies.

"That bird must be put out of pain," exclaimed Deerslayer, the moment the animal endeavored to rise on the wing, "and this is the rifle and the eye to do it."

The duck was still floundering along, when the fatal bullet overtook it, severing the head from the neck as neatly as if it had been done with an axe. Hist had indulged in a low cry of delight at the success of the young Indian, but now she affected to frown and resent the greater skill of his friend. The chief, on the contrary, uttered the usual exclamation of pleasure, and his smile proved how much he admired, and how little he envied.

"Never mind the gal, Sarpent, never mind Hist's feelin's, which will neither choke, nor drown, slay nor beautify," said Deerslayer, laughing. "'Tis nat'ral for women to enter into their husband's victories and defeats, and you are as good as man and wife, so far as prejudyce and fri'ndship go. Here is a bird over head that will put the pieces to the proof. I challenge you to an upward aim, with a flying target. That's a ra'al proof, and one that needs sartain rifles, as well as sartain eyes."

The species of eagle that frequents the water, and lives on fish, was also present, and one was hovering at a considerable height above the hut, greedily watching for an opportunity to make a swoop; its hungry young elevating their heads from a nest that was in sight, in the naked summit of a dead pine. Chingachgook silently turned a new piece against this bird, and after carefully watching his time, fired. A wider circuit than common denoted that the messenger had passed through the air at no great distance from the bird, though it missed its object. Deerslayer, whose aim was not more true than it was quick, fired as soon as it was certain his friend had missed, and the deep swoop that followed left it momentarily doubtful whether the eagle was hit or not. The marksman himself, however, proclaimed his own want of success, calling on his friend to seize another rifle, for he saw signs on the part of the bird of an intention to quit the spot.

"I made him wink, Sarpent, I do think his feathers were ruffled, but no blood has yet been drawn, nor is that old piece fit for so nice and quick a sight. Quick, Delaware, you've now a better rifle, and, Judith, bring out Killdeer, for this is the occasion to try his merits, if he has 'em."

A general movement followed, each of the competitors got ready, and the girls stood in eager expectation of the result. The eagle had made a wide circuit after his low swoop, and fanning his way upward, once more hovered nearly over the

hut, at a distance even greater than before. Chingachgook gazed at him, and then expressed his opinion of the impossibility of striking a bird at that great height, and while he was so nearly perpendicular, as to the range. But a low murmur from Hist produced a sudden impulse and he fired. The result showed how well he had calculated, the eagle not even varying his flight, sailing round and round in his airy circle, and looking down, as if in contempt, at his foes.

“Now, Judith,” cried Deerslayer, laughing, with glistening and delighted eyes, “we’ll see if Killdeer isn’t Killeagle, too! Give me room Serpent, and watch the reason of the aim, for by reason any thing may be l’arned.”

A careful sight followed, and was repeated again and again, the bird continuing to rise higher and higher. Then followed the flash and the report. The swift messenger sped upward, and, at the next instant, the bird turned on its side, and came swooping down, now struggling with one wing and then with the other, sometimes whirling in a circuit, next fanning desperately as if conscious of its injury, until, having described several complete circles around the spot, it fell heavily into the end of the Ark. On examining the body, it was found that the bullet had pierced it about half way between one of its wings and the breast-bone.





## CHAPTER 26

*"Upon two stony tables, spread before her,  
She lean'd her bosom, more than stony hard,  
There slept th' impartial judge, and strict restorer  
Of wrong, or right, with pain or with reward;  
There hung the score of all our debts, the card  
Where good, and bad, and life, and death, were painted;  
Was never heart of mortal so untainted,  
But when the roll was read, with thousand terrors fainted."*

—GILES FLETCHER, CHRIST'S VICTORY IN HEAVEN, LXV.

**“W**e’ve done an unthoughtful thing, Serpent — yes, Judith, we’ve done an unthoughtful thing in taking life with an object no better than vanity!” exclaimed Deerslayer, when the Delaware held up the enormous bird, by its wings, and exhibited the dying eyes riveted on its enemies with the gaze that the helpless ever fasten on their destroyers. “Twas more becomin’ two boys to gratify their feelin’s in this onthoughtful manner, than two warriors on a warpath, even though it be their first. Ah’s! me; well, as a punishment I’ll quit you at once, and when I find myself alone with them bloody-minded Mingos, it’s more than like I’ll have occasion to remember that life is sweet, even to the beasts of the woods and the fowls of the air. There, Judith; there’s Kildeer; take him back, ag’in, and keep him for some hand that’s more desarving to own such a piece.”

“I know of none as deserving as your own, Deerslayer,” answered the girl in haste; “none but yours shall keep the rifle.”

“If it depended on skill, you might be right enough, gal, but we should know when to use firearms, as well as how to use ’em. I haven’t l’arnt the first duty yet, it seems; so keep the piece till I have. The sight of a dyin’ and distressed creatur’, even though it be only a bird, brings wholesome thoughts to a man who don’t know how soon his own time may come, and who is pretty sartain that it will come afore the sun sets; I’d give back all my vain feelin’s, and rej’icin’s in hand and eye, if that poor eagle was only on its nest ag’in, with its young, praisin’ the Lord for anything that we can know about the matter, for health and strength!”

The listeners were confounded with this proof of sudden repentance in the hunter, and that too for an indulgence so very common, that men seldom stop to weigh its consequences, or the physical suffering it may bring on the unoffending and helpless. The Delaware understood what was said, though he scarce understood the feelings which had prompted the words, and by way of disposing of the difficulty, he drew his keen knife, and severed the head of the sufferer from its body.

“What a thing is power!” continued the hunter, “and what a thing it is to have it, and not to know how to use it. It’s no wonder, Judith, that the great so often fail of their duties, when even the little and the humble find it so hard to do what’s right, and not to do what’s wrong. Then, how one evil act brings others a’ter it! Now, wasn’t it for this furlough of mine, which must soon take me back to the Mingos, I’d find this creatur’s nest, if I travelled the woods a fortnight — though an eagle’s nest is soon found by them that understands the bird’s natur’ — but I’d travel a fortnight rather than not find it, just to put the young, too, out of their pain.”

“I’m glad to hear you say this, Deerslayer,” observed Hetty, “and God will be more apt to remember your sorrow for what you’ve done, than the wickedness itself. I thought how wicked it was to kill harmless birds, while you were shooting, and meant to tell you so; but, I don’t know how it happened — I was so curious to see if you could hit an eagle at so great a height, that I forgot altogether to speak, ‘till the mischief was done.”

“That’s it; that’s just it, my good Hetty. We can all see our faults and mistakes when it’s too late to help them! However I’m glad you didn’t speak, for I don’t think a word or two would have stopped me, just at that moment, and so the sin stands in its nakedness, and not aggravated by any unheeded calls to forbear. Well, well, bitter thoughts are hard to be borne at all times, but there’s times when they’re harder than at others.”

Little did Deerslayer know, while thus indulging in feelings that were natural to the man, and so strictly in accordance with his own unsophisticated and just principles, that, in the course of the inscrutable providence, which so uniformly and yet so mysteriously covers all events with its mantle, the very fault he was disposed so severely to censure was to be made the means of determining his own earthly fate. The mode and the moment in which he was to feel the influence of this interference, it would be premature to relate, but both will appear in the course of the succeeding chapters. As for the

young man, he now slowly left the Ark, like one sorrowing for his misdeeds, and seated himself in silence on the platform. By this time the sun had ascended to some height, and its appearance, taken in connection with his present feelings, induced him to prepare to depart. The Delaware got the canoe ready for his friend, as soon as apprised of his intention, while Hist busied herself in making the few arrangements that were thought necessary to his comfort. All this was done without ostentation, but in a way that left Deerslayer fully acquainted with, and equally disposed to appreciate, the motive. When all was ready, both returned to the side of Judith and Hetty, neither of whom had moved from the spot where the young hunter sat.

"The best fri'nds must often part," the last began, when he saw the whole party grouped around him — "yes, fri'ndship can't alter the ways of Providence, and let our feelin's be as they may, we must part. I've often thought there's moments when our words dwell longer on the mind than common, and when advice is remembered, just because the mouth that gives it isn't likely to give it ag'in. No one knows what will happen in this world, and therefore it may be well, when fri'nds separate under a likelihood that the parting may be long, to say a few words in kindness, as a sort of keepsakes. If all but one will go into the Ark, I'll talk to each in turn, and what is more, I'll listen to what you may have to say back ag'in, for it's a poor counsellor that won't take as well as give."

As the meaning of the speaker was understood, the two Indians immediately withdrew as desired, leaving the sisters, however, still standing at the young man's side. A look of Deerslayer's induced Judith to explain.

"You can advise Hetty as you land," she said hastily, "for I intend that she shall accompany you to the shore."

"Is this wise, Judith? It's true, that under common sarcumstances a feeble mind is a great protection among red-skins, but when their feelin's are up, and they're bent on revenge, it's hard to say what may come to pass. Besides —"

"What were you about to say, Deerslayer?" asked Judith, whose gentleness of voice and manner amounted nearly to tenderness, though she struggled hard to keep her emotions and apprehensions in subjection.

"Why, simply that there are sights and doin's that one even as little gifted with reason and memory as Hetty here, might better not witness. So, Judith, you would do well to let me land alone, and to keep your sister back."

"Never fear for me, Deerslayer," put in Hetty, who comprehended enough of the discourse to know its general drift, "I'm feeble minded, and that they say is an excuse for going anywhere; and what that won't excuse, will be overlooked on account of the Bible I always carry. It is wonderful, Judith, how all sorts of men; the trappers as well as the hunters; red-men as well as white; Mingos as well as Delawares do reverence and fear the Bible!"

"I think you have not the least ground to fear any injury, Hetty," answered the sister, "and therefore I shall insist on your going to the Huron camp with our friend. Your being there can do no harm, not even to yourself, and may do great good to Deerslayer."

"This is not a moment, Judith, to dispute, and so have the matter your own way," returned the young man. "Get yourself ready, Hetty, and go into the canoe, for I've a few parting words to say to your sister, which can do you no good."

Judith and her companion continued silent, until Hetty had so far complied as to leave them alone, when Deerslayer took up the subject, as if it had been interrupted by some ordinary occurrence, and in a very matter of fact way.

"Words spoken at parting, and which may be the last we ever hear from a fri'nd are not soon forgotten," he repeated, "and so Judith, I intend to speak to you like a brother, seein' I'm not old enough to be your father. In the first place, I wish to caution you ag'in your inimies, of which two may be said to ha'nt your very footsteps, and to beset your ways. The first is oncommon good looks, which is as dangerous a foe to some young women, as a whole tribe of Mingos could prove, and which calls for great watchfulness — not to admire and praise — but to distrust and sarcumvent. Yes, good looks may be sarcumvented, and fairly outwitted, too. In order to do this you've only to remember that they melt like the snows, and, when once gone, they never come back ag'in. The seasons come and go, Judith, and if we have winter, with storms and frosts, and spring with chills and leafless trees, we have summer with its sun and glorious skies, and fall with its fruits, and a garment thrown over the forest, that no beauty of the town could rummage out of all the shops in America. 'Arth is in an eternal round, the goodness of God bringing back the pleasant when we've had enough of the onpleasant. But it's not so with good looks. They are lent for a short time in youth, to be used and not abused, and, as I never met with a young woman to whom providence has been as bountiful as it has to you, Judith, in this partic'lar, I warn you, as it might be with my dyin' breath, to beware of the inimy — fri'nd, or inimy, as we deal with the gift."

It was so grateful to Judith to hear these unequivocal admissions of her personal charms, that much would have been

forgiven to the man who made them, let him be who he might. But, at that moment, and from a far better feeling, it would not have been easy for Deerslayer seriously to offend her, and she listened with a patience, which, had it been foretold only a week earlier, it would have excited her indignation to hear.

"I understand your meaning, Deerslayer," returned the girl, with a meekness and humility that a little surprised her listener, "and hope to be able to profit by it. But, you have mentioned only one of the enemies I have to fear; who, or what is the other."

"The other is givin' way afore your own good sense and judgment, I find, Judith; yes, he's not as dangerous as I supposed. Howsever, havin' opened the subject, it will be as well to end it honestly. The first inimy you have to be watchful of, as I've already told you, Judith, is oncommon good looks, and the next is an oncommon knowledge of the sarcumstance. If the first is bad, the last doesn't, in any way, mend the matter, so far as safety and peace of mind are consarned."

How much longer the young man would have gone on in his simple and unsuspecting, but well intentioned manner, it might not be easy to say, had he not been interrupted by his listener's bursting into tears, and giving way to an outbreak of feeling, which was so much the more violent from the fact that it had been with so much difficulty suppressed. At first her sobs were so violent and uncontrollable that Deerslayer was a little appalled, and he was abundantly repentant from the instant that he discovered how much greater was the effect produced by his words than he had anticipated. Even the austere and exacting are usually appeased by the signs of contrition, but the nature of Deerslayer did not require proofs of intense feelings so strong in order to bring him down to a level with the regrets felt by the girl herself. He arose, as if an adder had stung him, and the accents of the mother that soothes her child were scarcely more gentle and winning than the tones of his voice, as he now expressed his contrition at having gone so far.

"It was well meant, Judith," he said, "but it was not intended to hurt your feelin's so much. I have overdone the advice, I see; yes, I've overdone it, and I crave your pardon for the same. Fri'ndship's an awful thing! Sometimes it chides us for not having done enough; and then, ag'in it speaks in strong words for havin' done too much. Howsever, I acknowledge I've overdone the matter, and as I've a ra'al and strong regard for you, I rej'ice to say it, inasmuch as it proves how much better you are, than my own vanity and consaits had made you out to be."

Judith now removed her hands from her face, her tears had ceased, and she unveiled a countenance so winning with the smile which rendered it even radiant, that the young man gazed at her, for a moment, with speechless delight.

"Say no more, Deerslayer," she hastily interposed; "it pains me to hear you find fault with yourself. I know my own weakness, all the better, now I see that you have discovered it; the lesson, bitter as I have found it for a moment, shall not be forgotten. We will not talk any longer of these things, for I do not feel myself brave enough for the undertaking, and I should not like the Delaware, or Hist, or even Hetty, to notice my weakness. Farewell, Deerslayer; may God bless and protect you as your honest heart deserves blessings and protection, and as I must think he will."

Judith had so far regained the superiority that properly belonged to her better education, high spirit, and surpassing personal advantages, as to preserve the ascendancy she had thus accidentally obtained, and effectually prevented any return to the subject that was as singularly interrupted, as it had been singularly introduced. The young man permitted her to have every thing her own way, and when she pressed his hard hand in both her own, he made no resistance, but submitted to the homage as quietly, and with quite as matter of course a manner, as a sovereign would have received a similar tribute from a subject, or the mistress from her suitor. Feeling had flushed the face and illuminated the whole countenance of the girl, and her beauty was never more resplendant than when she cast a parting glance at the youth. That glance was filled with anxiety, interest and gentle pity. At the next instant, she darted into the hut and was seen no more, though she spoke to Hist from a window, to inform her that their friend expected her appearance.

"You know enough of red-skin natur', and red-skin usages, Wah-ta-Wah, to see the condition I am in on account of this furlough," commenced the hunter in Delaware, as soon as the patient and submissive girl of that people had moved quietly to his side; "you will therefore best onderstand how unlikely I am ever to talk with you ag'in. I've but little to say; but that little comes from long livin' among your people, and from havin' obsarved and noted their usages. The life of a woman is hard at the best, but I must own, though I'm not opinionated in favor of my own colour, that it is harder among the red men than it is among the pale-faces. This is a p'int on which Christians may well boast, if boasting can be set down for Christianity in any manner or form, which I rather think it cannot. Howsever, all women have their trials. Red women have their'n in what I should call the nat'ral way, while white women take 'em innoculated like. Bear your burthen, Hist,

becomingly, and remember if it be a little toilsome, how much lighter it is than that of most Indian women. I know the Sarpent well — what I call cordially — and he will never be a tyrant to any thing he loves, though he will expect to be treated himself like a Mohican Chief. There will be cloudy days in your lodge I suppose, for they happen under all usages, and among all people, but, by keepin' the windows of the heart open there will always be room for the sunshine to enter. You come of a great stock yourself, and so does Chingachgook. It's not very likely that either will ever forget the sarcumstance and do any thing to disgrace your forefathers. Nevertheless, likin' is a tender plant, and never thrives long when watered with tears. Let the 'arth around your married happiness be moistened by the dews of kindness."

"My pale brother is very wise; Wah will keep in her mind all that his wisdom tells her."

"That's judicious and womanly, Hist. Care in listening, and stout-heartedness in holding to good counsel, is a wife's great protection. And, now, ask the Sarpent to come and speak with me, for a moment, and carry away with you all my best wishes and prayers. I shall think of you, Hist, and of your intended husband, let what may come to pass, and always wish you well, here and hereafter, whether the last is to be according to Indian idees, or Christian doctrines."

Hist shed no tear at parting. She was sustained by the high resolution of one who had decided on her course, but her dark eyes were luminous with the feelings that glowed within, and her pretty countenance beamed with an expression of determination that was in marked and singular contrast to its ordinary gentleness. It was but a minute ere the Delaware advanced to the side of his friend with the light, noiseless tread of an Indian.

"Come this-a-way, Sarpent, here more out of sight of the women," commenced the Deerslayer, "for I've several things to say that mustn't so much as be suspected, much less overheard. You know too well the natur' of furloughs and Mingos to have any doubts or misgivin's consarnin' what is like to happen, when I get back to the camp. On them two p'int's therefore, a few words will go a great way. In the first place, chief, I wish to say a little about Hist, and the manner in which you red men treat your wives. I suppose it's accordin' to the gifts of your people that the women should work, and the men hunt; but there's such a thing as moderation in all matters. As for huntin', I see no good reason why any limits need be set to that, but Hist comes of too good a stock to toil like a common drudge. One of your means and standin' need never want for corn, or potatoes, or anything that the fields yield; therefore, I hope the hoe will never be put into the hands of any wife of yourn. You know I am not quite a beggar, and all I own, whether in ammunition, skins, arms, or calicoes, I give to Hist, should I not come back to claim them by the end of the season. This will set the maiden up, and will buy labor for her, for a long time to come. I suppose I needn't tell you to love the young woman, for that you do already, and whomsoever the man ra'ally loves, he'll be likely enough to cherish. Nevertheless, it can do no harm to say that kind words never rankle, while bitter words do. I know you're a man, Sarpent, that is less apt to talk in his own lodge, than to speak at the Council Fire; but forgetful moments may overtake us all, and the practyse of kind doin', and kind talkin', is a wonderful advantage in keepin' peace in a cabin, as well as on a hunt."

"My ears are open," returned the Delaware gravely; "the words of my brother have entered so far that they never can fall out again. They are like rings, that have no end, and cannot drop. Let him speak on; the song of the wren and the voice of a friend never tire."

"I will speak a little longer, chief, but you will excuse it for the sake of old companionship, should I now talk about myself. If the worst comes to the worst, it's not likely there'll be much left of me but ashes, so a grave would be useless, and a sort of vanity. On that score I'm no way partic'lar, though it might be well enough to take a look at the remains of the pile, and should any bones, or pieces be found, 'twould be more decent to gather them together, and bury them, than to let them lie for the wolves to gnaw at, and howl over. These matters can make no great difference in the mind, but men of white blood and Christian feelin's have rather a gift for graves."

"It shall be done as my brother says," returned the Indian, gravely. "If his mind is full, let him empty it in the bosom of a friend."

"I thank you, Sarpent; my mind's easy enough; yes, it's tolerable easy. Idees will come uppermost that I'm not apt to think about in common, it's true, but by striving ag'in some, and lettin' other some out, all will come right in the long run. There's one thing, howsever, chief, that does seem to me to be onreasonable, and ag'in natur', though the missionaries say it's true, and bein' of my religion and colour I feel bound to believe them. They say an Injin may torment and tortur' the body to his heart's content, and scalp, and cut, and tear, and burn, and consume all his inventions and devilties, until nothin' is left but ashes, and they shall be scattered to the four winds of heaven, yet when the trumpet of God shall sound,

all will come together ag'in, and the man will stand forth in his flesh, the same creatur' as to looks, if not as to feelin's, that he was afore he was harmed!"

"The missionaries are good men — mean well," returned the Delaware courteously; "they are not great medicines. They think all they say, Deerslayer; that is no reason why warriors and orators should be all ears. When Chingachgook shall see the father of Tamenund standing in his scalp, and paint, and war lock, then will he believe the missionaries."

"Seein' is believin', of a sartainty; ahs! me — and some of us may see these things sooner than we thought. I comprehend your meanin' about Tamenund's father, Sarpent, and the idee's a close idee. Tamenund is now an elderly man, say eighty every day of it, and his father was scalped, and tormented, and burnt, when the present prophet was a youngster. Yes, if one could see that come to pass, there wouldn't be much difficulty in yieldin' faith to all that the missionaries say. Howsever, I am not ag'in the opinion now, for you must know, Sarpent, that the great principle of Christianity is to believe without seeing, and a man should always act up to his religion and principles, let them be what they may."

"That is strange for a wise nation!" said the Delaware with emphasis. "The red man looks hard, that he may see and understand."

"Yes, that's plauserble, and is agreeable to mortal pride, but it's not as deep as it seems. If we could understand all we see, Sarpent, there might be not only sense, but safety, in refusin' to give faith to any one thing that we might find oncomperhensible; but when there's so many things about which it may be said we know nothin' at all, why, there's little use, and no reason, in bein' difficult touchin' any one in partic'lar. For my part, Delaware, all my thoughts haven't been on the game, when outlyin' in the hunts and scoutin's of our youth. Many's the hour I've passed, pleasantly enough too, in what is tarmed conterplation by my people. On such occasions the mind is actyve, though the body seems lazy and listless. An open spot on a mountain side, where a wide look can be had at the heavens and the 'arth, is a most judicious place for a man to get a just idee of the power of the Manitou, and of his own littleness. At such times, there isn't any great disposition to find fault with little difficulties, in the way of comperhension, as there are so many big ones to hide them. Believin' comes easy enough to me at such times, and if the Lord made man first out of arth, as they tell me it is written in the Bible; then turns him into dust at death; I see no great difficulty in the way to bringin' him back in the body, though ashes be the only substance left. These things lie beyond our understandin', though they may and do lie so close to our feelin's. But, of all the doctrines, Sarpent, that which disturbs me, and disconsarts my mind the most, is the one which teaches us to think that a pale-face goes to one heaven, and a red-skin to another; it may separate in death them which lived much together, and loved each other well, in life!"

"Do the missionaries teach their white brethren to think it is so?" demanded the Indian, with serious earnestness. "The Delawares believe that good men and brave warriors will hunt together in the same pleasant woods, let them belong to whatever tribe they may; that all the unjust Indians and cowards will have to sneak in with the dogs and the wolves to get venison for their lodges."

"Tis wonderful how many consaits mankind have consarnin' happiness and misery, here after!" exclaimed the hunter, borne away by the power of his own thoughts. "Some believe in burnin's and flames, and some think punishment is to eat with the wolves and dogs. Then, ag'in, some fancy heaven to be only the carryin' out of their own 'arthly longin's, while others fancy it all gold and shinin' lights! Well, I've an idee of my own, in that matter, which is just this, Sarpent. Whenever I've done wrong, I've ginirally found 'twas owin' to some blindness of the mind, which hid the right from view, and when sight has returned, then has come sorrow and repentance. Now, I consait that, after death, when the body is laid aside or, if used at all, is purified and without its longin's, the spirit sees all things in their ra'al lights and never becomes blind to truth and justice. Such bein' the case, all that has been done in life, is beheld as plainly as the sun is seen at noon; the good brings joy, while the evil brings sorrow. There's nothin' onreasonable in that, but it's agreeable to every man's exper'ence."

"I thought the pale-faces believed all men were wicked; who then could ever find the white man's heaven?"

"That's ingen'ous, but it falls short of the missionary teachin's. You'll be Christianized one day, I make no doubt, and then 'twill all come plain enough. You must know, Sarpent, that there's been a great deed of salvation done, that, by God's help, enables all men to find a pardon for their wickednesses, and that is the essence of the white man's religion. I can't stop to talk this matter over with you any longer, for Hetty's in the canoe, and the furlough takes me away, but the time will come I hope when you'll feel these things; for, after all, they must be felt rather than reasoned about. Ah's! me; well,

Delaware, there's my hand; you know it's that of a fri'nd, and will shake it as such, though it never has done you one half the good its owner wishes it had."

The Indian took the offered hand, and returned its pressure warmly. Then falling back on his acquired stoicism of manner, which so many mistake for constitutional indifference, he drew up in reserve, and prepared to part from his friend with dignity. Deerslayer, however, was more natural, nor would he have at all cared about giving way to his feelings, had not the recent conduct and language of Judith given him some secret, though ill defined apprehensions of a scene. He was too humble to imagine the truth concerning the actual feelings of that beautiful girl, while he was too observant not to have noted the struggle she had maintained with herself, and which had so often led her to the very verge of discovery. That something extraordinary was concealed in her breast he thought obvious enough, and, through a sentiment of manly delicacy that would have done credit to the highest human refinement, he shrunk from any exposure of her secret that might subsequently cause regret to the girl, herself. He therefore determined to depart, now, and that without any further manifestations of feeling either from him, or from others.

"God bless you! Sarpent — God bless you!" cried the hunter, as the canoe left the side of the platform. "Your Manitou and my God only know when and where we shall meet ag'in; I shall count it a great blessing, and a full reward for any little good I may have done on 'arth, if we shall be permitted to know each other, and to consort together, hereafter, as we have so long done in these pleasant woods afore us!"

Chingachgook waved his hand. Drawing the light blanket he wore over his head, as a Roman would conceal his grief in his robes, he slowly withdrew into the Ark, in order to indulge his sorrow and his musings, alone. Deerslayer did not speak again until the canoe was half-way to the shore. Then he suddenly ceased paddling, at an interruption that came from the mild, musical voice of Hetty.

"Why do you go back to the Hurons, Deerslayer?" demanded the girl. "They say I am feeble-minded, and such they never harm, but you have as much sense as Hurry Harry; and more too, Judith thinks, though I don't see how that can well be."

"Ah! Hetty, afore we land I must converse a little with you child, and that too on matters touching your own welfare, principally. Stop paddling — or, rather, that the Mingos needn't think we are plotting and contriving, and so treat us accordingly, just dip your paddle lightly, and give the canoe a little motion and no more. That's just the idee and the movement; I see you're ready enough at an appearance, and might be made useful at a sarcumvention if it was lawful now to use one — that's just the idee and the movement! Ah's! me. Desait and a false tongue are evil things, and altogether onbecoming our colour, Hetty, but it is a pleasure and a satisfaction to outdo the contrivances of a red-skin in the strife of lawful warfare. My path has been short, and is like soon to have an end, but I can see that the wanderings of a warrior aren't altogether among brambles and difficulties. There's a bright side to a warpath, as well as to most other things, if we'll only have the wisdom to see it, and the ginerosity to own it."

"And why should your warpath, as you call it, come so near to an end, Deerslayer?"

"Because, my good girl, my furlough comes so near to an end. They're likely to have pretty much the same tarmination, as regards time, one following on the heels of the other, as a matter of course."

"I don't understand your meaning, Deerslayer —" returned the girl, looking a little bewildered. "Mother always said people ought to speak more plainly to me than to most other persons, because I'm feeble minded. Those that are feeble minded, don't understand as easily as those that have sense."

"Well then, Hetty, the simple truth is this. You know that I'm now a captvy to the Hurons, and captvies can't do, in all things, as they please —"

"But how can you be a captive," eagerly interrupted the girl—"when you are out here on the lake, in father's best canoe, and the Indians are in the woods with no canoe at all? That can't be true, Deerslayer!"

"I wish with all my heart and soul, Hetty, that you was right, and that I was wrong, instead of your bein' all wrong, and I bein' only too near the truth. Free as I seem to your eyes, gal, I'm bound hand and foot in ra'alilty."

"Well it is a great misfortune not to have sense! Now I can't see or understand that you are a captive, or bound in any manner. If you are bound, with what are your hands and feet fastened?"

"With a furlough, gal; that's a thong that binds tighter than any chain. One may be broken, but the other can't. Ropes and chains allow of knives, and desait, and contrivances; but a furlough can be neither cut, slipped nor sarcumvented."

“What sort of a thing is a furlough, then, if it be stronger than hemp or iron? I never saw a furlough.”

“I hope you may never feel one, gal; the tie is altogether in the feelin’s, in these matters, and therefore is to be felt and not seen. You can understand what it is to give a promise, I dare to say, good little Hetty?”

“Certainly. A promise is to say you will do a thing, and that binds you to be as good as your word. Mother always kept her promises to me, and then she said it would be wicked if I didn’t keep my promises to her, and to every body else.”

“You have had a good mother, in some matters, child, whatever she may have been in other some. That is a promise, and as you say it must be kept. Now, I fell into the hands of the Mingos last night, and they let me come off to see my fri’nds and send messages in to my own colour, if any such feel consarn on my account, on condition that I shall be back when the sun is up today, and take whatever their revenge and hatred can contrive, in the way of torments, in satisfaction for the life of a warrior that fell by my rifle, as well as for that of the young woman shot by Hurry, and other disapp’intments met with on and about this lake. What is called a promise atween mother and darter, or even atween strangers in the settlements is called a furlough when given by one soldier to another, on a warpath. And now I suppose you understand my situation, Hetty.”

The girl made no answer for some time, but she ceased paddling altogether, as if the novel idea distracted her mind too much to admit of other employment. Then she resumed the dialogue earnestly and with solicitude.

“Do you think the Hurons will have the heart to do what you say, Deerslayer?” she asked. “I have found them kind and harmless.”

“That’s true enough as consarns one like you, Hetty, but it’s a very different affair when it comes to an open inimy, and he too the owner of a pretty sartain rifle. I don’t say that they bear me special malice on account of any expl’ites already performed, for that would be bragging, as it might be, on the varge of the grave, but it’s no vanity to believe that they know one of their bravest and cunnin’est chiefs fell by my hands. Such bein’ the case, the tribe would reproach them if they failed to send the spirit of a pale-face to keep the company of the spirit of their red brother; always supposin’ that he can catch it. I look for no marcy, Hetty, at their hands; and my principal sorrow is that such a calamity should befall me on my first warpath: that it would come sooner or later, every soldier counts on and expects.”

“The Hurons shall not harm you, Deerslayer,” cried the girl, much excited — “Tis wicked as well as cruel; I have the Bible, here, to tell them so. Do you think I would stand by and see you tormented?”

“I hope not, my good Hetty, I hope not; and, therefore, when the moment comes, I expect you will move off, and not be a witness of what you can’t help, while it would grieve you. But, I haven’t stopped the paddles to talk of my own afflictions and difficulties, but to speak a little plainly to you, gal, consarnin’ your own matters.”

“What can you have to say to me, Deerslayer! Since mother died, few talk to me of such things.”

“So much the worse, poor gal; yes, ’tis so much the worse, for one of your state of mind needs frequent talking to, in order to escape the snares and desaits of this wicked world. You haven’t forgotten Hurry Harry, gal, so soon, I calculate?”

“I! — I forget Henry March!” exclaimed Hetty, starting. “Why should I forget him, Deerslayer, when he is our friend, and only left us last night. Then the large bright star that mother loved so much to gaze at was just over the top of yonder tall pine on the mountain, as Hurry got into the canoe; and when you landed him on the point, near the east bay, it wasn’t more than the length of Judith’s handsomest ribbon above it.”

“And how can you know how long I was gone, or how far I went to land Hurry, seein’ you were not with us, and the distance was so great, to say nothing of the night?”

“Oh! I know when it was, well enough,” returned Hetty positively — “There’s more ways than one for counting time and distance. When the mind is engaged, it is better than any clock. Mine is feeble, I know, but it goes true enough in all that touches poor Hurry Harry. Judith will never marry March, Deerslayer.”

“That’s the p’int, Hetty; that’s the very p’int I want to come to. I suppose you know that it’s nat’ral for young people to have kind feelin’s for one another, more especially when one happens to be a youth and t’other a maiden. Now, one of your years and mind, gal, that has neither father nor mother, and who lives in a wilderness frequented by hunters and trappers, needs be on her guard against evils she little dreams of.”

“What harm can it be to think well of a fellow creature,” returned Hetty simply, though the conscious blood was stealing to her cheeks in spite of a spirit so pure that it scarce knew why it prompted the blush, “the Bible tells us to ‘love them who despitefully use’ us, and why shouldn’t we like them that do not.”

“Ah! Hetty, the love of the missionaries isn’t the sort of likin’ I mean. Answer me one thing, child; do you believe yourself to have mind enough to become a wife, and a mother?”

“That’s not a proper question to ask a young woman, Deerslayer, and I’ll not answer it,” returned the girl, in a reproving manner — much as a parent rebukes a child for an act of indiscretion. “If you have any thing to say about Hurry, I’ll hear that — but you must not speak evil of him; he is absent, and ’tis unkind to talk evil of the absent.”

“Your mother has given you so many good lessons, Hetty, that my fears for you are not as great as they were. Nevertheless, a young woman without parents, in your state of mind, and who is not without beauty, must always be in danger in such a lawless region as this. I would say nothin’ amiss of Hurry, who, in the main, is not a bad man for one of his callin’, but you ought to know one thing, which it may not be altogether pleasant to tell you, but which must be said. March has a desperate likin’ for your sister Judith.”

“Well, what of that? Everybody admires Judith, she’s so handsome, and Hurry has told me, again and again, how much he wishes to marry her. But that will never come to pass, for Judith don’t like Hurry. She likes another, and talks about him in her sleep; though you need not ask me who he is, for all the gold in King George’s crown, and all the jewels too, wouldn’t tempt me to tell you his name. If sisters can’t keep each other’s secrets, who can?”

“Sartainly, I do not wish you to tell me, Hetty, nor would it be any advantage to a dyin’ man to know. What the tongue says when the mind’s asleep, neither head nor heart is answerable for.”

“I wish I knew why Judith talks so much in her sleep, about officers, and honest hearts, and false tongues, but I suppose she don’t like to tell me, as I’m feeble minded. Isn’t it odd, Deerslayer, that Judith don’t like Hurry — he who is the bravest looking youth that ever comes upon the lake, and is as handsome as she is herself. Father always said they would be the comeliest couple in the country, though mother didn’t fancy March any more than Judith. There’s no telling what will happen, they say, until things actually come to pass.”

“Ahs! me — well, poor Hetty, ’tis of no great use to talk to them that can’t understand you, and so I’ll say no more about what I did wish to speak of, though it lay heavy on my mind. Put the paddle in motion ag’in, gal, and we’ll push for the shore, for the sun is nearly up, and my furlough is almost out.”

The canoe now glided ahead, holding its way towards the point where Deerslayer well knew that his enemies expected him, and where he now began to be afraid he might not arrive in season to redeem his plighted faith. Hetty, perceiving his impatience without very clearly comprehending its cause, however, seconded his efforts in a way that soon rendered their timely return no longer a matter of doubt. Then, and then only, did the young man suffer his exertions to flag, and Hetty began, again, to prattle in her simple confiding manner, though nothing farther was uttered that it may be thought necessary to relate.





## CHAPTER 27

*"Thou hast been busy, Death, this day, and yet  
But half thy work is done! The gates of hell  
Are thronged, yet twice ten thousand spirits more  
Who from their warm and healthful tenements  
Fear no divorce; must, ere the sun go down,  
Enter the world of woe!"—*

—SOUTHEY, RODERICK, THE LAST OF THE GOTH, XXIV, 1-6.

One experienced in the signs of the heavens, would have seen that the sun wanted but two or three minutes of the zenith, when Deerslayer landed on the point, where the Hurons were now encamped, nearly abreast of the castle. This spot was similar to the one already described, with the exception that the surface of the land was less broken, and less crowded with trees. Owing to these two circumstances, it was all the better suited to the purpose for which it had been selected, the space beneath the branches bearing some resemblance to a densely wooded lawn. Favoured by its position and its spring, it had been much resorted to by savages and hunters, and the natural grasses had succeeded their fires, leaving an appearance of sward in places, a very unusual accompaniment of the virgin forest. Nor was the margin of water fringed with bushes, as on so much of its shore, but the eye penetrated the woods immediately on reaching the strand, commanding nearly the whole area of the projection.

If it was a point of honor with the Indian warrior to redeem his word, when pledged to return and meet his death at a given hour, so was it a point of characteristic pride to show no womanish impatience, but to reappear as nearly as possible at the appointed moment. It was well not to exceed the grace accorded by the generosity of the enemy, but it was better to meet it to a minute. Something of this dramatic effect mingles with most of the graver usages of the American aborigines, and no doubt, like the prevalence of a similar feeling among people more sophisticated and refined, may be referred to a principle of nature. We all love the wonderful, and when it comes attended by chivalrous self-devotion and a rigid regard to honor, it presents itself to our admiration in a shape doubly attractive. As respects Deerslayer, though he took a pride in showing his white blood, by often deviating from the usages of the red-men, he frequently dropped into their customs, and oftener into their feelings, unconsciously to himself, in consequence of having no other arbiters to appeal to, than their judgments and tastes. On the present occasion, he would have abstained from betraying a feverish haste by a too speedy return, since it would have contained a tacit admission that the time asked for was more than had been wanted; but, on the other hand, had the idea occurred to him, he would have quickened his movements a little, in order to avoid the dramatic appearance of returning at the precise instant set as the utmost limit of his absence. Still, accident had interfered to defeat the last intention, for when the young man put his foot on the point, and advanced with a steady tread towards the group of chiefs that was seated in grave array on a fallen tree, the oldest of their number cast his eye upward, at an opening in the trees, and pointed out to his companions the startling fact that the sun was just entering a space that was known to mark the zenith. A common, but low exclamation of surprise and admiration escaped every mouth, and the grim warriors looked at each other, some with envy and disappointment, some with astonishment at the precise accuracy of their victim, and others with a more generous and liberal feeling. The American Indian always deemed his moral victories the noblest, prizing the groans and yielding of his victim under torture, more than the trophy of his scalp; and the trophy itself more than his life. To slay, and not to bring off the proof of victory, indeed, was scarcely deemed honorable, even these rude and fierce tenants of the forest, like their more nurtured brethren of the court and the camp, having set up for themselves imaginary and arbitrary points of honor, to supplant the conclusions of the right and the decisions of reason.

The Hurons had been divided in their opinions concerning the probability of their captive's return. Most among them, indeed, had not expected it possible for a pale-face to come back voluntarily, and meet the known penalties of an Indian torture; but a few of the seniors expected better things from one who had already shown himself so singularly cool, brave and upright. The party had come to its decision, however, less in the expectation of finding the pledge redeemed, than in the hope of disgracing the Delawares by casting into their teeth the delinquency of one bred in their villages. They would have greatly preferred that Chingachgook should be their prisoner, and prove the traitor, but the pale-face scion of the hated stock was no bad substitute for their purposes, failing in their designs against the ancient stem. With a view to render their triumph as signal as possible, in the event of the hour's passing without the reappearance of the hunter, all the warriors and scouts of the party had been called in, and the whole band, men, women and children, was now assembled at

this single point, to be a witness of the expected scene. As the castle was in plain view, and by no means distant, it was easily watched by daylight, and, it being thought that its inmates were now limited to Hurry, the Delaware and the two girls, no apprehensions were felt of their being able to escape unseen. A large raft having a breast-work of logs had been prepared, and was in actual readiness to be used against either Ark or castle as occasion might require, so soon as the fate of Deerslayer was determined, the seniors of the party having come to the opinion that it was getting to be hazardous to delay their departure for Canada beyond the coming night. In short the band waited merely to dispose of this single affair, ere it brought matters with those in the Castle to a crisis, and prepared to commence its retreat towards the distant waters of Ontario.

It was an imposing scene into which Deerslayer now found himself advancing. All the older warriors were seated on the trunk of the fallen tree, waiting his approach with grave decorum. On the right stood the young men, armed, while left was occupied by the women and children. In the centre was an open space of considerable extent, always canopied by trees, but from which the underbrush, dead wood, and other obstacles had been carefully removed. The more open area had probably been much used by former parties, for this was the place where the appearance of a sward was the most decided. The arches of the woods, even at high noon, cast their sombre shadows on the spot, which the brilliant rays of the sun that struggled through the leaves contributed to mellow, and, if such an expression can be used, to illuminate. It was probably from a similar scene that the mind of man first got its idea of the effects of gothic tracery and churchly hues, this temple of nature producing some such effect, so far as light and shadow were concerned, as the well-known offspring of human invention.

As was not unusual among the tribes and wandering bands of the Aborigines, two chiefs shared, in nearly equal degrees, the principal and primitive authority that was wielded over these children of the forest. There were several who might claim the distinction of being chief men, but the two in question were so much superior to all the rest in influence, that, when they agreed, no one disputed their mandates, and when they were divided the band hesitated, like men who had lost their governing principle of action. It was also in conformity with practice, perhaps we might add in conformity with nature, that one of the chiefs was indebted to his mind for his influence, whereas the other owed his distinction altogether to qualities that were physical. One was a senior, well known for eloquence in debate, wisdom in council, and prudence in measures; while his great competitor, if not his rival, was a brave distinguished in war, notorious for ferocity, and remarkable, in the way of intellect, for nothing but the cunning and expedients of the war path. The first was Rivenoak, who has already been introduced to the reader, while the last was called le Panth'ere, in the language of the Canadas, or the Panther, to resort to the vernacular of the English colonies. The appellation of the fighting chief was supposed to indicate the qualities of the warrior, agreeably to a practice of the red man's nomenclature, ferocity, cunning and treachery being, perhaps, the distinctive features of his character. The title had been received from the French, and was prized so much the more from that circumstance, the Indian submitting profoundly to the greater intelligence of his pale-face allies, in most things of this nature. How well the sobriquet was merited will be seen in the sequel.

Rivenoak and the Panther sat side by side awaiting the approach of their prisoner, as Deerslayer put his moccasined foot on the strand, nor did either move, or utter a syllable, until the young man had advanced into the centre of the area, and proclaimed his presence with his voice. This was done firmly, though in the simple manner that marked the character of the individual.

"Here I am, Mingos," he said, in the dialect of the Delawares, a language that most present understood; "here I am, and there is the sun. One is not more true to the laws of natur', than the other has proved true to his word. I am your prisoner; do with me what you please. My business with man and 'arth is settled; nothing remains now but to meet the white man's God, accordin' to a white man's duties and gifts."

A murmur of approbation escaped even the women at this address, and, for an instant there was a strong and pretty general desire to adopt into the tribe one who owned so brave a spirit. Still there were dissenters from this wish, among the principal of whom might be classed the Panther, and his sister, le Sumach, so called from the number of her children, who was the widow of le Loup Cervier, now known to have fallen by the hand of the captive. Native ferocity held one in subjection, while the corroding passion of revenge prevented the other from admitting any gentler feeling at the moment. Not so with Rivenoak. This chief arose, stretched his arm before him in a gesture of courtesy, and paid his compliments with an ease and dignity that a prince might have envied. As, in that band, his wisdom and eloquence were confessedly without rivals, he knew that on himself would properly fall the duty of first replying to the speech of the pale-face.

"Pale-face, you are honest," said the Huron orator. "My people are happy in having captured a man, and not a skulking fox. We now know you; we shall treat you like a brave. If you have slain one of our warriors, and helped to kill others, you have a life of your own ready to give away in return. Some of my young men thought that the blood of a pale-face was too thin; that it would refuse to run under the Huron knife. You will show them it is not so; your heart is stout, as well as your body. It is a pleasure to make such a prisoner; should my warriors say that the death of le Loup Cervier ought not to be forgotten, and that he cannot travel towards the land of spirits alone, that his enemy must be sent to overtake him, they will remember that he fell by the hand of a brave, and send you after him with such signs of our friendship as shall not make him ashamed to keep your company. I have spoken; you know what I have said."

"True enough, Mingo, all true as the gospel," returned the simple minded hunter, "you have spoken, and I do know not only what you have said, but, what is still more important, what you mean. I dare to say your warrior the Lynx was a stout-hearted brave, and worthy of your friendship and respect, but I do not feel unworthy to keep his company, without any passport from your hands. Nevertheless, here I am, ready to receive judgment from your council, if, indeed, the matter was not determined among you afore I got back."

"My old men would not sit in council over a pale-face until they saw him among them," answered Rivenoak, looking around him a little ironically; "they said it would be like sitting in council over the winds; they go where they will, and come back as they see fit, and not otherwise. There was one voice that spoke in your favor, Deerslayer, but it was alone, like the song of the wren whose mate has been struck by the hawk."

"I thank that voice whosoever it may have been, Mingo, and will say it was as true a voice as the rest were lying voices. A furlough is as binding on a pale-face, if he be honest, as it is on a red-skin, and was it not so, I would never bring disgrace on the Delawares, among whom I may be said to have received my education. But words are useless, and lead to braggin' feelin's; here I am; act your will on me."

Rivenoak made a sign of acquiescence, and then a short conference was privately held among the chiefs. As soon as the latter ended, three or four young men fell back from among the armed group, and disappeared. Then it was signified to the prisoner that he was at liberty to go at large on the point, until a council was held concerning his fate. There was more of seeming, than of real confidence, however, in this apparent liberality, inasmuch as the young men mentioned already formed a line of sentinels across the breadth of the point, inland, and escape from any other part was out of the question. Even the canoe was removed beyond this line of sentinels, to a spot where it was considered safe from any sudden attempt. These precautions did not proceed from a failure of confidence, but from the circumstance that the prisoner had now complied with all the required conditions of his parole, and it would have been considered a commendable and honorable exploit to escape from his foes. So nice, indeed, were the distinctions drawn by the savages in cases of this nature, that they often gave their victims a chance to evade the torture, deeming it as creditable to the captors to overtake, or to outwit a fugitive, when his exertions were supposed to be quickened by the extreme jeopardy of his situation, as it was for him to get clear from so much extraordinary vigilance.

Nor was Deerslayer unconscious of, or forgetful, of his rights and of his opportunities. Could he now have seen any probable opening for an escape, the attempt would not have been delayed a minute. But the case seem'd desperate. He was aware of the line of sentinels, and felt the difficulty of breaking through it, unharmed. The lake offered no advantages, as the canoe would have given his foes the greatest facilities for overtaking him; else would he have found it no difficult task to swim as far as the castle. As he walked about the point, he even examined the spot to ascertain if it offered no place of concealment, but its openness, its size, and the hundred watchful glances that were turned towards him, even while those who made them affected not to see him, prevented any such expedient from succeeding. The dread and disgrace of failure had no influence on Deerslayer, who deemed it even a point of honor to reason and feel like a white man, rather than as an Indian, and who felt it a sort of duty to do all he could that did not involve a dereliction from principle, in order to save his life. Still he hesitated about making the effort, for he also felt that he ought to see the chance of success before he committed himself.

In the mean time the business of the camp appeared to proceed in its regular train. The chiefs consulted apart, admitting no one but the Sumach to their councils, for she, the widow of the fallen warrior, had an exclusive right to be heard on such an occasion. The young men strolled about in indolent listlessness, awaiting the result with Indian patience, while the females prepared the feast that was to celebrate the termination of the affair, whether it proved fortunate or otherwise for our hero. No one betrayed feeling, and an indifferent observer, beyond the extreme watchfulness of the

sentinels, would have detected no extraordinary movement or sensation to denote the real state of things. Two or three old women put their heads together, and it appeared unfavorably to the prospects of Deerslayer, by their scowling looks, and angry gestures; but a group of Indian girls were evidently animated by a different impulse, as was apparent by stolen glances that expressed pity and regret. In this condition of the camp, an hour soon glided away.

Suspense is perhaps the feeling of all others that is most difficult to be supported. When Deerslayer landed, he fully expected in the course of a few minutes to undergo the tortures of an Indian revenge, and he was prepared to meet his fate manfully; but, the delay proved far more trying than the nearer approach of suffering, and the intended victim began seriously to meditate some desperate effort at escape, as it might be from sheer anxiety to terminate the scene, when he was suddenly summoned, to appear once more in front of his judges, who had already arranged the band in its former order, in readiness to receive him.

“Killer of the Deer,” commenced Rivenoak, as soon as his captive stood before him, “my aged men have listened to wise words; they are ready to speak. You are a man whose fathers came from beyond the rising sun; we are children of the setting sun; we turn our faces towards the Great Sweet Lakes, when we look towards our villages. It may be a wide country and full of riches towards the morning, but it is very pleasant towards the evening. We love most to look in that direction. When we gaze at the east, we feel afraid, canoe after canoe bringing more and more of your people in the track of the sun, as if their land was so full as to run over. The red men are few already; they have need of help. One of our best lodges has lately been emptied by the death of its master; it will be a long time before his son can grow big enough to sit in his place. There is his widow; she will want venison to feed her and her children, for her sons are yet like the young of the robin, before they quit the nest. By your hand has this great calamity befallen her. She has two duties; one to le Loup Cervier, and one to his children. Scalp for scalp, life for life, blood for blood, is one law; to feed her young, another. We know you, Killer of the Deer. You are honest; when you say a thing, it is so. You have but one tongue, and that is not forked, like a snake’s. Your head is never hid in the grass; all can see it. What you say, that will you do. You are just. When you have done wrong, it is your wish to do right, again, as soon as you can. Here, is the Sumach; she is alone in her wigwam, with children crying around her for food — yonder is a rifle; it is loaded and ready to be fired. Take the gun, go forth and shoot a deer; bring the venison and lay it before the widow of Le Loup Cervier, feed her children; call yourself her husband. After which, your heart will no longer be Delaware, but Huron; le Sumach’s ears will not hear the cries of her children; my people will count the proper number of warriors.”

“I fear’d this, Rivenoak,” answered Deerslayer, when the other had ceased speaking — “yes, I did dread that it would come to this. Howsoever, the truth is soon told, and that will put an end to all expectations on this head. Mingo, I’m white and Christian born; ‘t would ill become me to take a wife, under red-skin forms, from among heathen. That which I wouldn’t do, in peaceable times, and under a bright sun, still less would I do behind clouds, in order to save my life. I may never marry; most likely Providence in putting me up here in the woods, has intended I should live single, and without a lodge of my own; but should such a thing come to pass, none but a woman of my own colour and gifts shall darken the door of my wigwam. As for feeding the young of your dead warrior, I would do that cheerfully, could it be done without discredit; but it cannot, seeing that I can never live in a Huron village. Your own young men must find the Sumach in venison, and the next time she marries, let her take a husband whose legs are not long enough to overrun territory that don’t belong to him. We fou’t a fair battle, and he fell; in this there is nothin’ but what a brave expects, and should be ready to meet. As for getting a Mingo heart, as well might you expect to see gray hairs on a boy, or the blackberry growing on the pine. No — no Huron; my gifts are white so far as wives are concerned; it is Delaware, in all things touchin’ Injins.”

These words were scarcely out of the mouth of Deerslayer, before a common murmur betrayed the dissatisfaction with which they had been heard. The aged women, in particular, were loud in their expressions of disgust, and the gentle Sumach, herself, a woman quite old enough to be our hero’s mother, was not the least pacific in her denunciations. But all the other manifestations of disappointment and discontent were thrown into the background, by the fierce resentment of the Panther. This grim chief had thought it a degradation to permit his sister to become the wife of a pale-face of the Yengeese at all, and had only given a reluctant consent to the arrangement — one by no means unusual among the Indians, however — at the earnest solicitations of the bereaved widow; and it goaded him to the quick to find his condescension slighted, the honor he had with so much regret been persuaded to accord, condemned. The animal from which he got his name does not glare on his intended prey with more frightful ferocity than his eyes gleamed on the captive, nor was his arm backward in seconding the fierce resentment that almost consumed his breast.

“Dog of the pale-faces!” he exclaimed in Iroquois, “go yell among the curs of your own evil hunting grounds!”

The denunciation was accompanied by an appropriate action. Even while speaking his arm was lifted, and the tomahawk hurled. Luckily the loud tones of the speaker had drawn the eye of Deerslayer towards him, else would that moment have probably closed his career. So great was the dexterity with which this dangerous weapon was thrown, and so deadly the intent, that it would have riven the skull of the prisoner, had he not stretched forth an arm, and caught the handle in one of its turns, with a readiness quite as remarkable as the skill with which the missile had been hurled. The projectile force was so great, notwithstanding, that when Deerslayer’s arm was arrested, his hand was raised above and behind his own head, and in the very attitude necessary to return the attack. It is not certain whether the circumstance of finding himself unexpectedly in this menacing posture and armed tempted the young man to retaliate, or whether sudden resentment overcame his forbearance and prudence. His eye kindled, however, and a small red spot appeared on each cheek, while he cast all his energy into the effort of his arm, and threw back the weapon at his assailant. The unexpectedness of this blow contributed to its success, the Panther neither raising an arm, nor bending his head to avoid it. The keen little axe struck the victim in a perpendicular line with the nose, directly between the eyes, literally braining him on the spot. Sallying forward, as the serpent darts at its enemy even while receiving its own death wound, this man of powerful frame fell his length into the open area formed by the circle, quivering in death. A common rush to his relief left the captive, in a single instant, quite without the crowd, and, willing to make one desperate effort for life, he bounded off with the activity of a deer. There was but a breathless instant, when the whole band, old and young, women and children, abandoning the lifeless body of the Panther where it lay, raised the yell of alarm and followed in pursuit.

Sudden as had been the event which induced Deerslayer to make this desperate trial of speed, his mind was not wholly unprepared for the fearful emergency. In the course of the past hour, he had pondered well on the chances of such an experiment, and had shrewdly calculated all the details of success and failure. At the first leap, therefore, his body was completely under the direction of an intelligence that turned all its efforts to the best account, and prevented everything like hesitation or indecision at the important instant of the start. To this alone was he indebted for the first great advantage, that of getting through the line of sentinels unharmed. The manner in which this was done, though sufficiently simple, merits a description.

Although the shores of the point were not fringed with bushes, as was the case with most of the others on the lake, it was owing altogether to the circumstance that the spot had been so much used by hunters and fishermen. This fringe commenced on what might be termed the main land, and was as dense as usual, extending in long lines both north and south. In the latter direction, then, Deerslayer held his way, and, as the sentinels were a little without the commencement of this thicket, before the alarm was clearly communicated to them the fugitive had gained its cover. To run among the bushes, however, was out of the question, and Deerslayer held his way, for some forty or fifty yards, in the water, which was barely knee deep, offering as great an obstacle to the speed of his pursuers as it did to his own. As soon as a favorable spot presented, he darted through the line of bushes and issued into the open woods. Several rifles were discharged at Deerslayer while in the water, and more followed as he came out into the comparative exposure of the clear forest. But the direction of his line of flight, which partially crossed that of the fire, the haste with which the weapons had been aimed, and the general confusion that prevailed in the camp prevented any harm from being done. Bullets whistled past him, and many cut twigs from the branches at his side, but not one touched even his dress. The delay caused by these fruitless attempts was of great service to the fugitive, who had gained more than a hundred yards on even the leading men of the Hurons, ere something like concert and order had entered into the chase. To think of following with rifles in hand was out of the question, and after emptying their pieces in vague hopes of wounding their captive, the best runners of the Indians threw them aside, calling out to the women and boys to recover and load them, again, as soon as possible.

Deerslayer knew too well the desperate nature of the struggle in which he was engaged to lose one of the precious moments. He also knew that his only hope was to run in a straight line, for as soon as he began to turn, or double, the greater number of his pursuers would put escape out of the question. He held his way therefore, in a diagonal direction up the acclivity, which was neither very high nor very steep in this part of the mountain, but which was sufficiently toilsome for one contending for life, to render it painfully oppressive. There, however, he slackened his speed to recover breath, proceeding even at a quick walk, or a slow trot, along the more difficult parts of the way. The Hurons were whooping and leaping behind him, but this he disregarded, well knowing they must overcome the difficulties he had surmounted ere they could reach the elevation to which he had attained. The summit of the first hill was now quite near him, and he saw, by the

formation of the land, that a deep glen intervened before the base of a second hill could be reached. Walking deliberately to the summit, he glanced eagerly about him in every direction in quest of a cover. None offered in the ground, but a fallen tree lay near him, and desperate circumstances required desperate remedies. This tree lay in a line parallel to the glen, at the brow of the hill. To leap on it, and then to force his person as close as possible under its lower side, took but a moment. Previously to disappearing from his pursuers, however, Deerslayer stood on the height and gave a cry of triumph, as if exulting at the sight of the descent that lay before him. In the next instant he was stretched beneath the tree.

No sooner was this expedient adopted, than the young man ascertained how desperate had been his own efforts, by the violence of the pulsations in his frame. He could hear his heart beat, and his breathing was like the action of a bellows, in quick motion. Breath was gained, however, and the heart soon ceased to throb as if about to break through its confinement. The footsteps of those who toiled up the opposite side of the acclivity were now audible, and presently voices and treads announced the arrival of the pursuers. The foremost shouted as they reached the height; then, fearful that their enemy would escape under favor of the descent, each leaped upon the fallen tree and plunged into the ravine, trusting to get a sight of the pursued ere he reached the bottom. In this manner, Huron followed Huron until Natty began to hope the whole had passed. Others succeeded, however, until quite forty had leaped over the tree, and then he counted them, as the surest mode of ascertaining how many could be behind. Presently all were in the bottom of the glen, quite a hundred feet below him, and some had even ascended part of the opposite hill, when it became evident an inquiry was making as to the direction he had taken. This was the critical moment, and one of nerves less steady, or of a training that had been neglected, would have seized it to rise and fly. Not so with Deerslayer. He still lay quiet, watching with jealous vigilance every movement below, and fast regaining his breath.

The Hurons now resembled a pack of hounds at fault. Little was said, but each man ran about, examining the dead leaves as the hound hunts for the lost scent. The great number of moccasins that had passed made the examination difficult, though the in-toe of an Indian was easily to be distinguished from the freer and wider step of a white man. Believing that no more pursuers remained behind, and hoping to steal away unseen, Deerslayer suddenly threw himself over the tree, and fell on the upper side. This achievement appeared to be effected successfully, and hope beat high in the bosom of the fugitive.

Rising to his hands and feet, after a moment lost in listening to the sounds in the glen, in order to ascertain if he had been seen, the young man next scrambled to the top of the hill, a distance of only ten yards, in the expectation of getting its brow between him and his pursuers, and himself so far under cover. Even this was effected, and he rose to his feet, walking swiftly but steadily along the summit, in a direction opposite to that in which he had first fled. The nature of the calls in the glen, however, soon made him uneasy, and he sprang upon the summit again, in order to reconnoitre. No sooner did he reach the height than he was seen, and the chase renewed. As it was better footing on the level ground, Deerslayer now avoided the side hill, holding his flight along the ridge; while the Hurons, judging from the general formation of the land, saw that the ridge would soon melt into the hollow, and kept to the latter, as the easiest mode of heading the fugitive. A few, at the same time, turned south, with a view to prevent his escaping in that direction, while some crossed his trail towards the water, in order to prevent his retreat by the lake, running southerly.

The situation of Deerslayer was now more critical than it ever had been. He was virtually surrounded on three sides, having the lake on the fourth. But he had pondered well on all the chances, and took his measures with coolness, even while at the top of his speed. As is generally the case with the vigorous border men, he could outrun any single Indian among his pursuers, who were principally formidable to him on account of their numbers, and the advantages they possessed in position, and he would not have hesitated to break off in a straight line at any spot, could he have got the whole band again fairly behind him. But no such chance did, or indeed could now offer, and when he found that he was descending towards the glen, by the melting away of the ridge, he turned short, at right angles to his previous course, and went down the declivity with tremendous velocity, holding his way towards the shore. Some of his pursuers came panting up the hill in direct chase, while most still kept on in the ravine, intending to head him at its termination.

Deerslayer had now a different, though a desperate project in view. Abandoning all thoughts of escape by the woods, he made the best of his way towards the canoe. He knew where it lay; could it be reached, he had only to run the gauntlet of a few rifles, and success would be certain. None of the warriors had kept their weapons, which would have retarded their speed, and the risk would come either from the uncertain hands of the women, or from those of some well grown boy; though most of the latter were already out in hot pursuit. Everything seemed propitious to the execution of this plan, and

the course being a continued descent, the young man went over the ground at a rate that promised a speedy termination to his toil.

As Deerslayer approached the point, several women and children were passed, but, though the former endeavoured to cast dried branches between his legs, the terror inspired by his bold retaliation on the redoubted Panther was so great, that none dared come near enough seriously to molest him. He went by all triumphantly and reached the fringe of bushes. Plunging through these, our hero found himself once more in the lake, and within fifty feet of the canoe. Here he ceased to run, for he well understood that his breath was now all important to him. He even stooped, as he advanced, and cooled his parched mouth by scooping water up in his hand to drink. Still the moments pressed, and he soon stood at the side of the canoe. The first glance told him that the paddles had been removed! This was a sore disappointment, after all his efforts, and, for a single moment, he thought of turning, and of facing his foes by walking with dignity into the centre of the camp again. But an infernal yell, such as the American savage alone can raise, proclaimed the quick approach of the nearest of his pursuers, and the instinct of life triumphed. Preparing himself duly, and giving a right direction to its bows, he ran off into the water bearing the canoe before him, threw all his strength and skill into a last effort, and cast himself forward so as to fall into the bottom of the light craft without materially impeding its way. Here he remained on his back, both to regain his breath and to cover his person from the deadly rifle. The lightness, which was such an advantage in paddling the canoe, now operated unfavorably. The material was so like a feather, that the boat had no momentum, else would the impulse in that smooth and placid sheet have impelled it to a distance from the shore that would have rendered paddling with the hands safe. Could such a point once be reached, Deerslayer thought he might get far enough out to attract the attention of Chingachgook and Judith, who would not fail to come to his relief with other canoes, a circumstance that promised everything. As the young man lay in the bottom of the canoe, he watched its movements by studying the tops of the trees on the mountainside, and judged of his distance by the time and the motions. Voices on the shore were now numerous, and he heard something said about manning the raft, which, fortunately for the fugitive, lay at a considerable distance on the other side of the point.

Perhaps the situation of Deerslayer had not been more critical that day than it was at this moment. It certainly had not been one half as tantalizing. He lay perfectly quiet for two or three minutes, trusting to the single sense of hearing, confident that the noise in the lake would reach his ears, did any one venture to approach by swimming. Once or twice he fancied that the element was stirred by the cautious movement of an arm, and then he perceived it was the wash of the water on the pebbles of the strand; for, in mimicry of the ocean, it is seldom that those little lakes are so totally tranquil as not to possess a slight heaving and setting on their shores. Suddenly all the voices ceased, and a death like stillness pervaded the spot: A quietness as profound as if all lay in the repose of inanimate life. By this time, the canoe had drifted so far as to render nothing visible to Deerslayer, as he lay on his back, except the blue void of space, and a few of those brighter rays that proceed from the effulgence of the sun, marking his proximity. It was not possible to endure this uncertainty long. The young man well knew that the profound stillness foreboded evil, the savages never being so silent as when about to strike a blow; resembling the stealthy foot of the panther ere he takes his leap. He took out a knife and was about to cut a hole through the bark, in order to get a view of the shore, when he paused from a dread of being seen in the operation, which would direct the enemy where to aim their bullets. At this instant a rifle was fired, and the ball pierced both sides of the canoe, within eighteen inches of the spot where his head lay. This was close work, but our hero had too lately gone through that which was closer to be appalled. He lay still half a minute longer, and then he saw the summit of an oak coming slowly within his narrow horizon.

Unable to account for this change, Deerslayer could restrain his impatience no longer. Hitching his body along, with the utmost caution, he got his eye at the bullet hole, and fortunately commanded a very tolerable view of the point. The canoe, by one of those imperceptible impulses that so often decide the fate of men as well as the course of things, had inclined southerly, and was slowly drifting down the lake. It was lucky that Deerslayer had given it a shove sufficiently vigorous to send it past the end of the point, ere it took this inclination, or it must have gone ashore again. As it was, it drifted so near it as to bring the tops of two or three trees within the range of the young man's view, as has been mentioned, and, indeed, to come in quite as close proximity with the extremity of the point as was at all safe. The distance could not much have exceeded a hundred feet, though fortunately a light current of air from the southwest began to set it slowly off shore.

Deerslayer now felt the urgent necessity of resorting to some expedient to get farther from his foes, and if possible to

apprise his friends of his situation. The distance rendered the last difficult, while the proximity to the point rendered the first indispensable. As was usual in such craft, a large, round, smooth stone was in each end of the canoe, for the double purpose of seats and ballast; one of these was within reach of his feet. This stone he contrived to get so far between his legs as to reach it with his hands, and then he managed to roll it to the side of its fellow in the bows, where the two served to keep the trim of the light boat, while he worked his own body as far aft as possible. Before quitting the shore, and as soon as he perceived that the paddles were gone, Deerslayer had thrown a bit of dead branch into the canoe, and this was within reach of his arm. Removing the cap he wore, he put it on the end of this stick, and just let it appear over the edge of the canoe, as far as possible from his own person. This ruse was scarcely adopted before the young man had a proof how much he had underrated the intelligence of his enemies. In contempt of an artifice so shallow and common place, a bullet was fired directly through another part of the canoe, which actually raised his skin. He dropped the cap, and instantly raised it immediately over his head, as a safeguard. It would seem that this second artifice was unseen, or what was more probable, the Hurons feeling certain of recovering their captive, wished to take him alive.

Deerslayer lay passive a few minutes longer, his eye at the bullet hole, however, and much did he rejoice at seeing that he was drifting, gradually, farther and farther from the shore. When he looked upward, the treetops had disappeared, but he soon found that the canoe was slowly turning, so as to prevent his getting a view of anything at his peephole, but of the two extremities of the lake. He now bethought him of the stick, which was crooked and offered some facilities for rowing without the necessity of rising. The experiment succeeded on trial, better even than he had hoped, though his great embarrassment was to keep the canoe straight. That his present manoeuvre was seen soon became apparent by the clamor on the shore, and a bullet entering the stern of the canoe traversed its length, whistling between the arms of our hero, and passed out at the head. This satisfied the fugitive that he was getting away with tolerable speed, and induced him to increase his efforts. He was making a stronger push than common, when another messenger from the point broke the stick out-board, and at once deprived him of his oar. As the sound of voices seemed to grow more and more distant, however, Deerslayer determined to leave all to the drift, until he believed himself beyond the reach of bullets. This was nervous work, but it was the wisest of all the expedients that offered, and the young man was encouraged to persevere in it by the circumstance that he felt his face fanned by the air, a proof that there was a little more wind.





## CHAPTER 28

*"Nor widows' tears, nor tender orphans' cries  
Can stop th' invader's force;  
Nor swelling seas, nor threatening skies,  
Prevent the pirate's course:  
Their lives to selfish ends decreed  
Through blood and rapine they proceed;  
No anxious thoughts of ill repute,  
Suspend the impetuous and unjust pursuit;  
But power and wealth obtain'd, guilty and great,  
Their fellow creatures' fears they raise, or urge their hate."*

—CONGREVE, "PINDARIC ODE," II.

By this time Deerslayer had been twenty minutes in the canoe, and he began to grow a little impatient for some signs of relief from his friends. The position of the boat still prevented his seeing in any direction, unless it were up or down the lake, and, though he knew that his line of sight must pass within a hundred yards of the castle, it, in fact, passed that distance to the westward of the buildings. The profound stillness troubled him also, for he knew not whether to ascribe it to the increasing space between him and the Indians, or to some new artifice. At length, wearied with fruitless watchfulness, the young man turned himself on his back, closed his eyes, and awaited the result in determined acquiescence. If the savages could so completely control their thirst for revenge, he was resolved to be as calm as themselves, and to trust his fate to the interposition of the currents and air.

Some additional ten minutes may have passed in this quiescent manner, on both sides, when Deerslayer thought he heard a slight noise, like a low rubbing against the bottom of his canoe. He opened his eyes of course, in expectation of seeing the face or arm of an Indian rising from the water, and found that a canopy of leaves was impending directly over his head. Starting to his feet, the first object that met his eye was Rivenoak, who had so far aided the slow progress of the boat, as to draw it on the point, the grating on the strand being the sound that had first given our hero the alarm. The change in the drift of the canoe had been altogether owing to the baffling nature of the light currents of the air, aided by some eddies in the water.

"Come," said the Huron with a quiet gesture of authority, to order his prisoner to land, "my young friend has sailed about till he is tired; he will forget how to run again, unless he uses his legs."

"You've the best of it, Huron," returned Deerslayer, stepping steadily from the canoe, and passively following his leader to the open area of the point; "Providence has helped you in an unexpected manner. I'm your prisoner ag'in, and I hope you'll allow that I'm as good at breaking gaol, as I am at keeping furloughs."

"My young friend is a Moose!" exclaimed the Huron. "His legs are very long; they have given my young men trouble. But he is not a fish; he cannot find his way in the lake. We did not shoot him; fish are taken in nets, and not killed by bullets. When he turns Moose again he will be treated like a Moose."

"Ay, have your talk, Rivenoak; make the most of your advantage. 'Tis your right, I suppose, and I know it is your gift. On that p'int there'll be no words atween us, for all men must and ought to follow their gifts. Howsoever, when your women begin to ta'nt and abuse me, as I suppose will soon happen, let 'em remember that if a pale-face struggles for life so long as it's lawful and manful, he knows how to loosen his hold on it, decently, when he feels that the time has come. I'm your captvye; work your will on me."

"My brother has had a long run on the hills, and a pleasant sail on the water," returned Rivenoak more mildly, smiling, at the same time, in a way that his listener knew denoted pacific intentions. "He has seen the woods; he has seen the water. Which does he like best? Perhaps he has seen enough to change his mind, and make him hear reason."

"Speak out, Huron. Something is in your thoughts, and the sooner it is said, the sooner you'll get my answer."

"That is straight! There is no turning in the talk of my pale-face friend, though he is a fox in running. I will speak to him; his ears are now open wider than before, and his eyes are not shut. The Sumach is poorer than ever. Once she had a brother and a husband. She had children, too. The time came and the husband started for the Happy Hunting Grounds, without saying farewell; he left her alone with his children. This he could not help, or he would not have done it; le Loup Cervier was a good husband. It was pleasant to see the venison, and wild ducks, and geese, and bear's meat, that hung in

his lodge in winter. It is now gone; it will not keep in warm weather. Who shall bring it back again? Some thought the brother would not forget his sister, and that, next winter, he would see that the lodge should not be empty. We thought this; but the Panther yelled, and followed the husband on the path of death. They are now trying which shall first reach the Happy Hunting Grounds. Some think the Lynx can run fastest, and some think the Panther can jump the farthest. The Sumach thinks both will travel so fast and so far that neither will ever come back. Who shall feed her and her young? The man who told her husband and her brother to quit her lodge, that there might be room for him to come into it. He is a great hunter, and we know that the woman will never want."

"Ay, Huron this is soon settled, accordin' to your notions, but it goes sorely ag'in the grain of a white man's feelin's. I've heard of men's saving their lives this-a-way, and I've know'd them that would prefer death to such a sort of captivity. For my part, I do not seek my end, nor do I seek matrimony."

"The pale-face will think of this, while my people get ready for the council. He will be told what will happen. Let him remember how hard it is to lose a husband and a brother. Go; when we want him, the name of Deerslayer will be called."

This conversation had been held with no one near but the speakers. Of all the band that had so lately thronged the place, Rivenoak alone was visible. The rest seemed to have totally abandoned the spot. Even the furniture, clothes, arms, and other property of the camp had entirely disappeared, and the place bore no other proofs of the crowd that had so lately occupied it, than the traces of their fires and resting places, and the trodden earth that still showed the marks of their feet. So sudden and unexpected a change caused Deerslayer a good deal of surprise and some uneasiness, for he had never known it to occur, in the course of his experience among the Delawares. He suspected, however, and rightly, that a change of encampment was intended, and that the mystery of the movement was resorted to in order to work on his apprehensions.

Rivenoak walked up the vista of trees as soon as he ceased speaking, leaving Deerslayer by himself. The chief disappeared behind the covers of the forest, and one unpractised in such scenes might have believed the prisoner left to the dictates of his own judgment. But the young man, while he felt a little amazement at the dramatic aspect of things, knew his enemies too well to fancy himself at liberty, or a free agent. Still, he was ignorant how far the Hurons meant to carry their artifices, and he determined to bring the question, as soon as practicable, to the proof. Affecting an indifference he was far from feeling, he strolled about the area, gradually getting nearer and nearer to the spot where he had landed, when he suddenly quickened his pace, though carefully avoiding all appearance of flight, and pushing aside the bushes, he stepped upon the beach. The canoe was gone, nor could he see any traces of it, after walking to the northern and southern verges of the point, and examining the shores in both directions. It was evidently removed beyond his reach and knowledge, and under circumstances to show that such had been the intention of the savages.

Deerslayer now better understood his actual situation. He was a prisoner on the narrow tongue of land, vigilantly watched beyond a question, and with no other means of escape than that of swimming. He, again, thought of this last expedient, but the certainty that the canoe would be sent in chase, and the desperate nature of the chances of success deterred him from the undertaking. While on the strand, he came to a spot where the bushes had been cut, and thrust into a small pile. Removing a few of the upper branches, he found beneath them the dead body of the Panther. He knew that it was kept until the savages might find a place to inter it, where it would be beyond the reach of the scalping knife. He gazed wistfully towards the castle, but there all seemed to be silent and desolate, and a feeling of loneliness and desertion came over him to increase the gloom of the moment.

"God's will be done!" murmured the young man, as he walked sorrowfully away from the beach, entering again beneath the arches of the wood. "God's will be done, on 'arth as it is in heaven! I did hope that my days would not be numbered so soon, but it matters little a'ter all. A few more winters, and a few more summers, and 'twould have been over, accordin' to natur'. Ah's! me, the young and actyve seldom think death possible, till he grins in their faces, and tells 'em the hour is come!"

While this soliloquy was being pronounced, the hunter advanced into the area, where to his surprise he saw Hetty alone, evidently awaiting his return. The girl carried the Bible under her arm, and her face, over which a shadow of gentle melancholy was usually thrown, now seemed sad and downcast. Moving nearer, Deerslayer spoke.

"Poor Hetty," he said, "times have been so troublesome, of late, that I'd altogether forgotten you; we meet, as it might be to mourn over what is to happen. I wonder what has become of Chingachgook and Wah!"

"Why did you kill the Huron, Deerslayer? —" returned the girl reproachfully. "Don't you know your commandments, which say 'Thou shalt not kill!' They tell me you have now slain the woman's husband and brother!"

"It's true, my good Hetty — 'tis gospel truth, and I'll not deny what has come to pass. But, you must remember, gal, that many things are lawful in war, which would be unlawful in peace. The husband was shot in open fight — or, open so far as I was concerned, while he had a better cover than common — and the brother brought his end on himself, by casting his tomahawk at an unarmed prisoner. Did you witness that deed, gal?"

"I saw it, and was sorry it happened, Deerslayer, for I hoped you wouldn't have returned blow for blow, but good for evil."

"Ah, Hetty, that may do among the Missionaries, but 'twould make an onsartain life in the woods! The Panther craved my blood, and he was foolish enough to throw arms into my hands, at the very moment he was striving a'ter it. 'Twould have been ag'in natur' not to raise a hand in such a trial, and 'twould have done discredit to my training and gifts. No — no — I'm as willing to give every man his own as another, and so I hope you'll testify to them that will be likely to question you as to what you've seen this day."

"Deerslayer, do you mean to marry Sumach, now she has neither husband nor brother to feed her?"

"Are such your idees of matrimony, Hetty! Ought the young to wive with the old — the pale-face with the red-skin — the Christian with the heathen? It's ag'in reason and natur', and so you'll see, if you think of it a moment."

"I've always heard mother say," returned Hetty, averting her face more from a feminine instinct than from any consciousness of wrong, "that people should never marry until they loved each other better than brothers and sisters, and I suppose that is what you mean. Sumach is old, and you are young!"

"Ay and she's red, and I'm white. Beside, Hetty, suppose you was a wife, now, having married some young man of your own years, and state, and colour — Hurry Harry, for instance —" Deerslayer selected this example simply from the circumstance that he was the only young man known to both — "and that he had fallen on a war path, would you wish to take to your bosom, for a husband, the man that slew him?"

"Oh! no, no, no —" returned the girl shuddering — "That would be wicked as well as heartless! No Christian girl could, or would do that! I never shall be the wife of Hurry, I know, but were he my husband no man should ever be it, again, after his death!"

"I thought it would get to this, Hetty, when you come to understand sarcumstances. 'Tis a moral impossibility that I should ever marry Sumach, and, though Injin weddin's have no priests and not much religion, a white man who knows his gifts and duties can't profit by that, and so make his escape at the fitting time. I do think death would be more nat'ral like, and welcome, than wedlock with this woman."

"Don't say it too loud," interrupted Hetty impatiently; "I suppose she will not like to hear it. I'm sure Hurry would rather marry even me than suffer torments, though I am feeble minded; and I am sure it would kill me to think he'd prefer death to being my husband."

"Ay, gal, you ain't Sumach, but a comely young Christian, with a good heart, pleasant smile, and kind eye. Hurry might be proud to get you, and that, too, not in misery and sorrow, but in his best and happiest days. Howsoever, take my advice, and never talk to Hurry about these things; he's only a borderer, at the best."

"I wouldn't tell him, for the world!" exclaimed the girl, looking about her like one affrighted, and blushing, she knew not why. "Mother always said young women shouldn't be forward, and speak their minds before they're asked; Oh! I never forget what mother told me. 'Tis a pity Hurry is so handsome, Deerslayer; I do think fewer girls would like him then, and he would sooner know his own mind."

"Poor gal, poor gal, it's plain enough how it is, but the Lord will bear in mind one of your simple heart and kind feelin's! We'll talk no more of these things; if you had reason, you'd be sorrowful at having let others so much into your secret. Tell me, Hetty, what has become of all the Hurons, and why they let you roam about the p'int as if you, too, was a prisoner?"

"I'm no prisoner, Deerslayer, but a free girl, and go when and where I please. Nobody dare hurt me! If they did, God would be angry, as I can show them in the Bible. No — no — Hetty Hutter is not afraid; she's in good hands. The Hurons are up yonder in the woods, and keep a good watch on us both, I'll answer for it, since all the women and children are on the look-out. Some are burying the body of the poor girl who was shot, so that the enemy and the wild beasts can't find it. I

told 'em that father and mother lay in the lake, but I wouldn't let them know in what part of it, for Judith and I don't want any of their heathenish company in our burying ground."

"Ahs! me; Well, it is an awful despatch to be standing here, alive and angry, and with the feelin's up and ferocious, one hour, and then to be carried away at the next, and put out of sight of mankind in a hole in the 'arth! No one knows what will happen to him on a warpath, that's sartain."

Here the stirring of leaves and the cracking of dried twigs interrupted the discourse, and apprised Deerslayer of the approach of his enemies. The Hurons closed around the spot that had been prepared for the coming scene, and in the centre of which the intended victim now stood, in a circle, the armed men being so distributed among the feeble members of the band, that there was no safe opening through which the prisoner could break. But the latter no longer contemplated flight, the recent trial having satisfied him of his inability to escape when pursued so closely by numbers. On the contrary, all his energies were aroused in order to meet his expected fate, with a calmness that should do credit to his colour and his manhood; one equally removed from recreant alarm, and savage boasting.

When Rivenoak re-appeared in the circle, he occupied his old place at the head of the area. Several of the elder warriors stood near him, but, now that the brother of Sumach had fallen, there was no longer any recognised chief present whose influence and authority offered a dangerous rivalry to his own. Nevertheless, it is well known that little which could be called monarchical or despotic entered into the politics of the North American tribes, although the first colonists, bringing with them to this hemisphere the notions and opinions of their own countries, often dignified the chief men of those primitive nations with the titles of kings and princes. Hereditary influence did certainly exist, but there is much reason to believe it existed rather as a consequence of hereditary merit and acquired qualifications, than as a birthright. Rivenoak, however, had not even this claim, having risen to consideration purely by the force of talents, sagacity, and, as Bacon expresses it in relation to all distinguished statesmen, "by a union of great and mean qualities;" a truth of which the career of the profound Englishman himself furnishes so apt an illustration. Next to arms, eloquence offers the great avenue to popular favor, whether it be in civilized or savage life, and Rivenoak had succeeded, as so many have succeeded before him, quite as much by rendering fallacies acceptable to his listeners, as by any profound or learned expositions of truth, or the accuracy of his logic. Nevertheless, he had influence; and was far from being altogether without just claims to its possession. Like most men who reason more than they feel, the Huron was not addicted to the indulgence of the more ferocious passions of his people: he had been commonly found on the side of mercy, in all the scenes of vindictive torture and revenge that had occurred in his tribe since his own attainment to power. On the present occasion, he was reluctant to proceed to extremities, although the provocation was so great. Still it exceeded his ingenuity to see how that alternative could well be avoided. Sumach resented her rejection more than she did the deaths of her husband and brother, and there was little probability that the woman would pardon a man who had so unequivocally preferred death to her embraces. Without her forgiveness, there was scarce a hope that the tribe could be induced to overlook its loss, and even to Rivenoak, himself, much as he was disposed to pardon, the fate of our hero now appeared to be almost hopelessly sealed.

When the whole band was arrayed around the captive, a grave silence, so much the more threatening from its profound quiet, pervaded the place. Deerslayer perceived that the women and boys had been preparing splinters of the fat pine roots, which he well knew were to be stuck into his flesh, and set in flames, while two or three of the young men held the thongs of bark with which he was to be bound. The smoke of a distant fire announced that the burning brands were in preparation, and several of the elder warriors passed their fingers over the edges of their tomahawks, as if to prove their keenness and temper. Even the knives seemed loosened in their sheathes, impatient for the bloody and merciless work to begin.

"Killer of the Deer," recommenced Rivenoak, certainly without any signs of sympathy or pity in his manner, though with calmness and dignity, "Killer of the Deer, it is time that my people knew their minds. The sun is no longer over our heads; tired of waiting on the Hurons, he has begun to fall near the pines on this side of the valley. He is travelling fast towards the country of our French fathers; it is to warn his children that their lodges are empty, and that they ought to be at home. The roaming wolf has his den, and he goes to it when he wishes to see his young. The Iroquois are not poorer than the wolves. They have villages, and wigwams, and fields of corn; the Good Spirits will be tired of watching them alone. My people must go back and see to their own business. There will be joy in the lodges when they hear our whoop from the forest! It will be a sorrowful whoop; when it is understood, grief will come after it. There will be one scalp-whoop, but there will be only one. We have the fur of the Muskrat; his body is among the fishes. Deerslayer must say whether another scalp

shall be on our pole. Two lodges are empty; a scalp, living or dead, is wanted at each door."

"Then take 'em dead, Huron," firmly, but altogether without dramatic boasting, returned the captive. "My hour is come, I do suppose, and what must be, must. If you are bent on the torture, I'll do my indvours to bear up ag'in it, though no man can say how far his natur' will stand pain, until he's been tried."

"The pale-face cur begins to put his tail between his legs!" cried a young and garrulous savage, who bore the appropriate title of the Corbeau Rouge; a sobriquet he had gained from the French by his facility in making unseasonable noises, and an undue tendency to hear his own voice; "he is no warrior; he has killed the Loup Cervier when looking behind him not to see the flash of his own rifle. He grunts like a hog, already; when the Huron women begin to torment him, he will cry like the young of the catamount. He is a Delaware woman, dressed in the skin of a Yengeese!"

"Have your say, young man; have your say," returned Deerslayer, unmoved; "you know no better, and I can overlook it. Talking may aggravate women, but can hardly make knives sharper, fire hotter, or rifles more sartain."

Rivenoak now interposed, reproving the Red Crow for his premature interference, and then directing the proper persons to bind the captive. This expedient was adopted, not from any apprehensions that he would escape, or from any necessity that was yet apparent of his being unable to endure the torture with his limbs free, but from an ingenious design of making him feel his helplessness, and of gradually sapping his resolution by undermining it, as it might be, little by little. Deerslayer offered no resistance. He submitted his arms and legs, freely if not cheerfully, to the ligaments of bark, which were bound around them by order of the chief, in a way to produce as little pain as possible. These directions were secret, and given in the hope that the captive would finally save himself from any serious bodily suffering by consenting to take the Sumach for a wife. As soon as the body of Deerslayer was withed in bark sufficiently to create a lively sense of helplessness, he was literally carried to a young tree, and bound against it in a way that effectually prevented him from moving, as well as from falling. The hands were laid flat against the legs, and thongs were passed over all, in a way nearly to incorporate the prisoner with the tree. His cap was then removed, and he was left half-standing, half-sustained by his bonds, to face the coming scene in the best manner he could.

Previously to proceeding to any thing like extremities, it was the wish of Rivenoak to put his captive's resolution to the proof by renewing the attempt at a compromise. This could be effected only in one manner, the acquiescence of the Sumach being indispensably necessary to a compromise of her right to be revenged. With this view, then, the woman was next desired to advance, and to look to her own interests; no agent being considered as efficient as the principal, herself, in this negotiation. The Indian females, when girls, are usually mild and submissive, with musical tones, pleasant voices and merry laughs, but toil and suffering generally deprive them of most of these advantages by the time they have reached an age which the Sumach had long before passed. To render their voices harsh, it would seem to require active, malignant, passions, though, when excited, their screams can rise to a sufficiently conspicuous degree of discordancy to assert their claim to possess this distinctive peculiarity of the sex. The Sumach was not altogether without feminine attraction, however, and had so recently been deemed handsome in her tribe, as not to have yet learned the full influence that time and exposure produce on man, as well as on woman. By an arrangement of Rivenoak's, some of the women around her had been employing the time in endeavoring to persuade the bereaved widow that there was still a hope Deerslayer might be prevailed on to enter her wigwam, in preference to entering the world of spirits, and this, too, with a success that previous symptoms scarcely justified. All this was the result of a resolution on the part of the chief to leave no proper means unemployed, in order to get transferred to his own nation the greatest hunter that was then thought to exist in all that region, as well as a husband for a woman who he felt would be likely to be troublesome, were any of her claims to the attention and care of the tribe overlooked.

In conformity with this scheme, the Sumach had been secretly advised to advance into the circle, and to make her appeal to the prisoner's sense of justice, before the band had recourse to the last experiment. The woman, nothing loth, consented, for there was some such attraction in becoming the wife of a noted hunter, among the females of the tribes, as is experienced by the sex, in more refined life, when they bestow their hands on the affluent. As the duties of a mother were thought to be paramount to all other considerations, the widow felt none of that embarrassment, in preferring her claims, to which even a female fortune hunter among ourselves might be liable. When she stood forth before the whole party, therefore, the children that she led by the hands fully justified all she did.

"You see me before you, cruel pale-face," the woman commenced; "your spirit must tell you my errand. I have found you; I cannot find le Loup Cervier, nor the Panther; I have looked for them in the lake, in the woods, in the clouds. I cannot

say where they have gone.”

“No man knows, good Sumach, no man knows,” interposed the captive. “When the spirit leaves the body, it passes into a world beyond our knowledge, and the wisest way, for them that are left behind, is to hope for the best. No doubt both your warriors have gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds, and at the proper time you will see ’em ag’in, in their improved state. The wife and sister of braves must have looked forward to some such tarmination of their ’arthly careers.”

“Cruel pale-face, what had my warriors done that you should slay them! They were the best hunters, and the boldest young men of their tribe; the Great Spirit intended that they should live until they withered like the branches of the hemlock, and fell of their own weight-”

“Nay — nay — good Sumach,” interrupted Deerslayer, whose love of truth was too indomitable to listen to such hyperbole with patience, even though it came from the torn breast of a widow — “Nay — nay, good Sumach, this is a little outdoing red-skin privileges. Young man was neither, any more than you can be called a young woman, and as to the Great Spirit’s intending that they should fall otherwise than they did, that’s a grievous mistake, inasmuch as what the Great Spirit intends is sartain to come to pass. Then, agin, it’s plain enough neither of your fri’nds did me any harm; I raised my hand ag’in ’em on account of what they were striving to do, rather than what they did. This is nat’ral law, ‘to do lest you should be done by.’”

“It is so. Sumach has but one tongue; she can tell but one story. The pale face struck the Hurons lest the Hurons should strike him. The Hurons are a just nation; they will forget it. The chiefs will shut their eyes and pretend not to have seen it; the young men will believe the Panther and the Lynx have gone to far off hunts, and the Sumach will take her children by the hand, and go into the lodge of the pale-face and say — ‘See; these are your children; they are also mine — feed us, and we will live with you.’”

“The tarms are onadmissable, woman, and though I feel for your losses, which must be hard to bear, the tarms cannot be accepted. As to givin’ you ven’son, in case we lived near enough together, that would be no great expl’ite; but as for becomin’ your husband, and the father of your children, to be honest with you, I feel no callin’ that-a-way.”

“Look at this boy, cruel pale-face; he has no father to teach him to kill the deer, or to take scalps. See this girl; what young man will come to look for a wife in a lodge that has no head? There are more among my people in the Canadas, and the Killer of Deer will find as many mouths to feed as his heart can wish for.”

“I tell you, woman,” exclaimed Deerslayer, whose imagination was far from seconding the appeal of the widow, and who began to grow restive under the vivid pictures she was drawing, “all this is nothing to me. People and kindred must take care of their own fatherless, leaving them that have no children to their own loneliness. As for me, I have no offspring, and I want no wife. Now, go away Sumach; leave me in the hands of your chiefs, for my colour, and gifts, and natur’ itself cry out ag’in the idee of taking you for a wife.”

It is unnecessary to expatiate on the effect of this downright refusal of the woman’s proposals. If there was anything like tenderness in her bosom — and no woman was probably ever entirely without that feminine quality — it all disappeared at this plain announcement. Fury, rage, mortified pride, and a volcano of wrath burst out, at one explosion, converting her into a sort of maniac, as it might beat the touch of a magician’s wand. Without deigning a reply in words, she made the arches of the forest ring with screams, and then flew forward at her victim, seizing him by the hair, which she appeared resolute to draw out by the roots. It was some time before her grasp could be loosened. Fortunately for the prisoner her rage was blind; since his total helplessness left him entirely at her mercy. Had it been better directed it might have proved fatal before any relief could have been offered. As it was, she did succeed in wrenching out two or three handfuls of hair, before the young men could tear her away from her victim.

The insult that had been offered to the Sumach was deemed an insult to the whole tribe; not so much, however, on account of any respect that was felt for the woman, as on account of the honor of the Huron nation. Sumach, herself, was generally considered to be as acid as the berry from which she derived her name, and now that her great supporters, her husband and brother, were both gone, few cared about concealing their aversion. Nevertheless, it had become a point of honor to punish the pale-face who disdained a Huron woman, and more particularly one who coolly preferred death to relieving the tribe from the support of a widow and her children. The young men showed an impatience to begin to torture that Rivenoak understood, and, as his older associates manifested no disposition to permit any longer delay, he was compelled to give the signal for the infernal work to proceed.

## CHAPTER 29

*"The ugly bear now minded not the stake,  
Nor how the cruel mastiffs do him tear,  
The stag lay still unroused from the brake,  
The foamy boar feared not the hunter's spear:  
All thing was still in desert, bush, and briar:"*

—THOMAS SACKVILLE; "THE COMPLAINT OF HENRY DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM,"

lxxxi.

It was one of the common expedients of the savages, on such occasions, to put the nerves of their victims to the severest proofs. On the other hand, it was a matter of Indian pride to betray no yielding to terror, or pain, but for the prisoner to provoke his enemies to such acts of violence as would soonest produce death. Many a warrior had been known to bring his own sufferings to a more speedy termination, by taunting reproaches and reviling language, when he found that his physical system was giving way under the agony of sufferings produced by a hellish ingenuity that might well eclipse all that has been said of the infernal devices of religious persecution. This happy expedient of taking refuge from the ferocity of his foes, in their passions, was denied Deerslayer however, by his peculiar notions of the duty of a white man, and he had stoutly made up his mind to endure everything, in preference to disgracing his colour.

No sooner did the young men understand that they were at liberty to commence, than some of the boldest and most forward among them sprang into the arena, tomahawk in hand. Here they prepared to throw that dangerous weapon, the object being to strike the tree as near as possible to the victim's head, without absolutely hitting him. This was so hazardous an experiment that none but those who were known to be exceedingly expert with the weapon were allowed to enter the lists at all, lest an early death might interfere with the expected entertainment. In the truest hands it was seldom that the captive escaped injury in these trials, and it often happened that death followed, even when the blow was not premeditated. In the particular case of our hero, Rivenoak and the older warriors were apprehensive that the example of the Panther's fate might prove a motive with some fiery spirit suddenly to sacrifice his conqueror, when the temptation of effecting it in precisely the same manner, and possibly with the identical weapon with which the warrior had fallen, offered. This circumstance of itself rendered the ordeal of the tomahawk doubly critical for the Deerslayer. It would seem, however, that all who now entered what we shall call the lists, were more disposed to exhibit their own dexterity, than to resent the deaths of their comrades. Each prepared himself for the trial with the feelings of rivalry, rather than with the desire for vengeance, and, for the first few minutes, the prisoner had little more connection with the result, than grew out of the interest that necessarily attached itself to a living target. The young men were eager, instead of being fierce, and Rivenoak thought he still saw signs of being able to save the life of the captive when the vanity of the young men had been gratified; always admitting that it was not sacrificed to the delicate experiments that were about to be made. The first youth who presented himself for the trial was called The Raven, having as yet had no opportunity of obtaining a more warlike sobriquet. He was remarkable for high pretension, rather than for skill or exploits, and those who knew his character thought the captive in imminent danger when he took his stand, and poised the tomahawk. Nevertheless, the young man was good natured, and no thought was uppermost in his mind other than the desire to make a better cast than any of his fellows. Deerslayer got an inkling of this warrior's want of reputation by the injunctions that he had received from the seniors, who, indeed, would have objected to his appearing in the arena, at all, but for an influence derived from his father; an aged warrior of great merit, who was then in the lodges of the tribe. Still, our hero maintained an appearance of self-possession. He had made up his mind that his hour was come, and it would have been a mercy, instead of a calamity, to fall by the unsteadiness of the first hand that was raised against him. After a suitable number of flourishes and gesticulations that promised much more than he could perform, the Raven let the tomahawk quit his hand. The weapon whirled through the air with the usual evolutions, cut a chip from the sapling to which the prisoner was bound within a few inches of his cheek, and stuck in a large oak that grew several yards behind him. This was decidedly a bad effort, and a common sneer proclaimed as much, to the great mortification of the young man. On the other hand, there was a general but suppressed murmur of admiration at the steadiness with which the captive stood the trial. The head was the only part he could move, and this had been purposely left free, that the tormentors might have the amusement, and the tormented endure the shame, of his dodging, and otherwise attempting to avoid the blows. Deerslayer disappointed these hopes by a command of nerve that rendered his whole body as immovable as the tree to which he was bound. Nor did he even adopt

the natural and usual expedient of shutting his eyes, the firmest and oldest warrior of the red-men never having more disdainfully denied himself this advantage under similar circumstances.

The Raven had no sooner made his unsuccessful and puerile effort, than he was succeeded by le Daim—Mose, or the Moose; a middle aged warrior who was particularly skilful in the use of the tomahawk, and from whose attempt the spectators confidently looked for gratification. This man had none of the good nature of the Raven, but he would gladly have sacrificed the captive to his hatred of the pale-faces generally, were it not for the greater interest he felt in his own success as one particularly skilled in the use of this weapon. He took his stand quietly, but with an air of confidence, poised his little axe but a single instant, advanced a foot with a quick motion, and threw. Deerslayer saw the keen instrument whirling towards him, and believed all was over; still, he was not touched. The tomahawk had actually bound the head of the captive to the tree, by carrying before it some of his hair, having buried itself deep beneath the soft bark. A general yell expressed the delight of the spectators, and the Moose felt his heart soften a little towards the prisoner, whose steadiness of nerve alone enabled him to give this evidence of his consummate skill.

Le Daim—Mose was succeeded by the Bounding Boy, or le Garcon qui Bondi who came leaping into the circle, like a hound or a goat at play. This was one of those elastic youths whose muscles seemed always in motion, and who either affected, or who from habit was actually unable, to move in any other manner than by showing the antics just mentioned. Nevertheless, he was both brave and skilful, and had gained the respect of his people by deeds in war, as well as success in the hunts. A far nobler name would long since have fallen to his share, had not a French-man of rank inadvertently given him this sobriquet, which he religiously preserved as coming from his Great Father who lived beyond the Wide Salt Lake. The Bounding Boy skipped about in front of the captive, menacing him with his tomahawk, now on one side and now on another, and then again in front, in the vain hope of being able to extort some sign of fear by this parade of danger. At length Deerslayer's patience became exhausted by all this mummery, and he spoke for the first time since the trial had actually commenced.

"Throw away, Huron," he cried, "or your tomahawk will forget its ar'n'd. Why do you keep loping about like a fa'a'n that's showing its dam how well it can skip, when you're a warrior grown, yourself, and a warrior grown defies you and all your silly antiks. Throw, or the Huron gals will laugh in your face."

Although not intended to produce such an effect, the last words aroused the "Bounding" warrior to fury. The same nervous excitability which rendered him so active in his person, made it difficult to repress his feelings, and the words were scarcely past the lips of the speaker than the tomahawk left the hand of the Indian. Nor was it cast without ill-will, and a fierce determination to slay. Had the intention been less deadly, the danger might have been greater. The aim was uncertain, and the weapon glanced near the cheek of the captive, slightly cutting the shoulder in its evolutions. This was the first instance in which any other object than that of terrifying the prisoner, and of displaying skill had been manifested, and the Bounding Boy was immediately led from the arena, and was warmly rebuked for his intemperate haste, which had come so near defeating all the hopes of the band. To this irritable person succeeded several other young warriors, who not only hurled the tomahawk, but who cast the knife, a far more dangerous experiment, with reckless indifference; yet they always manifested a skill that prevented any injury to the captive. Several times Deerslayer was grazed, but in no instance did he receive what might be termed a wound. The unflinching firmness with which he faced his assailants, more especially in the sort of rally with which this trial terminated, excited a profound respect in the spectators, and when the chiefs announced that the prisoner had well withstood the trials of the knife and the tomahawk, there was not a single individual in the band who really felt any hostility towards him, with the exception of Sumach and the Bounding Boy. These two discontented spirits got together, it is true, feeding each other's ire, but as yet their malignant feelings were confined very much to themselves, though there existed the danger that the others, ere long, could not fail to be excited by their own efforts into that demoniacal state which usually accompanied all similar scenes among the red men.

Rivenoak now told his people that the pale-face had proved himself to be a man. He might live with the Delawares, but he had not been made woman with that tribe. He wished to know whether it was the desire of the Hurons to proceed any further. Even the gentlest of the females, however, had received too much satisfaction in the late trials to forego their expectations of a gratifying exhibition, and there was but one voice in the request to proceed. The politic chief, who had some such desire to receive so celebrated a hunter into his tribe, as a European Minister has to devise a new and available means of taxation, sought every plausible means of arresting the trial in season, for he well knew, if permitted to go far enough to arouse the more ferocious passions of the tormentors, it would be as easy to dam the waters of the great lakes of



his own region, as to attempt to arrest them in their bloody career. He therefore called four or five of the best marksmen to him, and bid them put the captive to the proof of the rifle, while at the same time he cautioned them touching the necessity of their maintaining their own credit, by the closest attention to the manner of exhibiting their skill.

When Deerslayer saw the chosen warriors step into the circle, with their arms prepared for service, he felt some such relief as the miserable sufferer, who has long endured the agonies of disease, feels at the certain approach of death. Any trifling variance in the aim of this formidable weapon would prove fatal; since, the head being the target, or rather the point it was desired to graze without injuring, an inch or two of difference in the line of projection must at once determine the question of life or death.

In the torture by the rifle there was none of the latitude permitted that appeared in the case of even Gessler's apple, a hair's breadth being, in fact, the utmost limits that an expert marksman would allow himself on an occasion like this. Victims were frequently shot through the head by too eager or unskilful hands, and it often occurred that, exasperated by the fortitude and taunts of the prisoner, death was dealt intentionally in a moment of ungovernable irritation. All this Deerslayer well knew, for it was in relating the traditions of such scenes, as well as of the battles and victories of their people, that the old men beguiled the long winter evenings in their cabins. He now fully expected the end of his career, and experienced a sort of melancholy pleasure in the idea that he was to fall by a weapon as much beloved as the rifle. A slight interruption, however, took place before the business was allowed to proceed.

Hetty Hutter witnessed all that passed, and the scene at first had pressed upon her feeble mind in a way to paralyze it entirely; but, by this time she had rallied, and was growing indignant at the unmerited suffering the Indians were inflicting on her friend. Though timid, and shy as the young of the deer on so many occasions, this right-feeling girl was always intrepid in the cause of humanity; the lessons of her mother, and the impulses of her own heart — perhaps we might say the promptings of that unseen and pure spirit that seemed ever to watch over and direct her actions — uniting to keep down the apprehensions of woman, and to impel her to be bold and resolute. She now appeared in the circle, gentle, feminine, even bashful in mien, as usual, but earnest in her words and countenance, speaking like one who knew herself to be sustained by the high authority of God.

"Why do you torment Deerslayer, redmen?" she asked "What has he done that you trifle with his life; who has given you the right to be his judges? Suppose one of your knives or tomahawks had hit him; what Indian among you all could cure the wound you would make. Besides, in harming Deerslayer, you injure your own friend; when father and Hurry Harry came after your scalps, he refused to be of the party, and staid in the canoe by himself. You are tormenting a good friend, in tormenting this young man!"

The Hurons listened with grave attention, and one among them, who understood English, translated what had been said into their native tongue. As soon as Rivenoak was made acquainted with the purport of her address he answered it in his own dialect; the interpreter conveying it to the girl in English.

"My daughter is very welcome to speak," said the stern old orator, using gentle intonations and smiling as kindly as if addressing a child — "The Hurons are glad to hear her voice; they listen to what she says. The Great Spirit often speaks to men with such tongues. This time, her eyes have not been open wide enough to see all that has happened. Deerslayer did not come for our scalps, that is true; why did he not come? Here they are on our heads; the war locks are ready to be taken hold of; a bold enemy ought to stretch out his hand to seize them. The Iroquois are too great a nation to punish men that take scalps. What they do themselves, they like to see others do. Let my daughter look around her and count my warriors. Had I as many hands as four warriors, their fingers would be fewer than my people, when they came into your hunting grounds. Now, a whole hand is missing. Where are the fingers? Two have been cut off by this pale-face; my Hurons wish to see if he did this by means of a stout heart, or by treachery. Like a skulking fox, or like a leaping panther."

"You know yourself, Huron, how one of them fell. I saw it, and you all saw it, too. 'Twas too bloody to look at; but it was not Deerslayer's fault. Your warrior sought his life, and he defended himself. I don't know whether this good book says that it was right, but all men will do that. Come, if you want to know which of you can shoot best, give Deerslayer a rifle, and then you will find how much more expert he is than any of your warriors; yes, than all of them together!"

Could one have looked upon such a scene with indifference, he would have been amused at the gravity with which the savages listened to the translation of this unusual request. No taunt, no smile mingled with their surprise, for Hetty had a character and a manner too saintly to subject her infirmity to the mockings of the rude and ferocious. On the contrary, she

was answered with respectful attention.

"My daughter does not always talk like a chief at a Council Fire," returned Rivenoak, "or she would not have said this. Two of my warriors have fallen by the blows of our prisoner; their grave is too small to hold a third. The Hurons do not like to crowd their dead. If there is another spirit about to set out for the far off world, it must not be the spirit of a Huron; it must be the spirit of a pale-face. Go, daughter, and sit by Sumach, who is in grief; let the Huron warriors show how well they can shoot; let the pale-face show how little he cares for their bullets."

Hetty's mind was unequal to a sustained discussion, and accustomed to defer to the directions of her seniors she did as told, seating herself passively on a log by the side of the Sumach, and averting her face from the painful scene that was occurring within the circle.

The warriors, as soon as this interruption had ceased, resumed their places, and again prepared to exhibit their skill. As there was a double object in view, that of putting the constancy of the captive to the proof, and that of showing how steady were the hands of the marksmen under circumstances of excitement, the distance was small, and, in one sense, safe. But in diminishing the distance taken by the tormentors, the trial to the nerves of the captive was essentially increased. The face of Deerslayer, indeed, was just removed sufficiently from the ends of the guns to escape the effects of the flash, and his steady eye was enabled to look directly into their muzzles, as it might be, in anticipation of the fatal messenger that was to issue from each. The cunning Hurons well knew this fact, and scarce one levelled his piece without first causing it to point as near as possible at the forehead of the prisoner, in the hope that his fortitude would fail him, and that the band would enjoy the triumph of seeing a victim quail under their ingenious cruelty. Nevertheless each of the competitors was still careful not to injure, the disgrace of striking prematurely being second only to that of failing altogether in attaining the object. Shot after shot was made; all the bullets coming in close proximity to the Deerslayer's head, without touching it. Still no one could detect even the twitching of a muscle on the part of the captive, or the slightest winking of an eye. This indomitable resolution, which so much exceeded everything of its kind that any present had before witnessed, might be referred to three distinct causes. The first was resignation to his fate, blended with natural steadiness of deportment; for our hero had calmly made up his mind that he must die, and preferred this mode to any other; the second was his great familiarity with this particular weapon, which deprived it of all the terror that is usually connected with the mere form of the danger; and the third was this familiarity carried out in practice, to a degree so nice as to enable the intended victim to tell, within an inch, the precise spot where each bullet must strike, for he calculated its range by looking in at the bore of the piece. So exact was Deerslayer's estimation of the line of fire, that his pride of feeling finally got the better of his resignation, and when five or six had discharged their bullets into the tree, he could not refrain from expressing his contempt at their want of hand and eye.

"You may call this shooting, Mingos!" he exclaimed, "but we've squaws among the Delawares, and I have known Dutch gals on the Mohawk, that could outdo your greatest indivours. Ondo these arms of mine, put a rifle into my hands, and I'll pin the thinnest warlock in your party to any tree you can show me, and this at a hundred yards — ay, or at two hundred if the objects can be seen, nineteen shots in twenty; or, for that matter twenty in twenty, if the piece is creditable and trusty!"

A low menacing murmur followed this cool taunt. The ire of the warriors kindled at listening to such a reproach from one who so far disdained their efforts as to refuse even to wink when a rifle was discharged as near his face as could be done without burning it. Rivenoak perceived that the moment was critical, and, still retaining his hope of adopting so noted a hunter into his tribe, the politic old chief interposed in time, probably to prevent an immediate resort to that portion of the torture which must necessarily have produced death through extreme bodily suffering, if in no other manner. Moving into the centre of the irritated group, he addressed them with his usual wily logic and plausible manner, at once suppressing the fierce movement that had commenced.

"I see how it is," he said. "We have been like the pale-faces when they fasten their doors at night, out of fear of the red men. They use so many bars that the fire comes and burns them before they can get out. We have bound the Deerslayer too tight: the thongs keep his limbs from shaking and his eyes from shutting. Loosen him; let us see what his own body is really made of."

It is often the case when we are thwarted in a cherished scheme, that any expedient, however unlikely to succeed, is gladly resorted to in preference to a total abandonment of the project. So it was with the Hurons. The proposal of the chief found instant favor, and several hands were immediately at work, cutting and tearing the ropes of bark from the body of our hero. In half a minute Deerslayer stood as free from bonds as when an hour before he had commenced his flight on the

side of the mountain. Some little time was necessary that he should recover the use of his limbs, the circulation of the blood having been checked by the tightness of the ligatures, and this was accorded to him by the politic Rivenoak, under the pretence that his body would be more likely to submit to apprehension if its true tone were restored; though really with a view to give time to the fierce passions which had been awakened in the bosoms of his young men to subside. This ruse succeeded, and Deerslayer by rubbing his limbs, stamping his feet, and moving about, soon regained the circulation, recovering all his physical powers as effectually as if nothing had occurred to disturb them.

It is seldom men think of death in the pride of their health and strength. So it was with Deerslayer. Having been helplessly bound and, as he had every reason to suppose, so lately on the very verge of the other world, to find himself so unexpectedly liberated, in possession of his strength and with a full command of limb, acted on him like a sudden restoration to life, reanimating hopes that he had once absolutely abandoned. From that instant all his plans changed. In this, he simply obeyed a law of nature; for while we have wished to represent our hero as being resigned to his fate, it has been far from our intention to represent him as anxious to die. From the instant that his buoyancy of feeling revived, his thoughts were keenly bent on the various projects that presented themselves as modes of evading the designs of his enemies, and he again became the quick witted, ingenious and determined woodsman, alive to all his own powers and resources. The change was so great that his mind resumed its elasticity, and no longer thinking of submission, it dwelt only on the devices of the sort of warfare in which he was engaged.

As soon as Deerslayer was released, the band divided itself in a circle around him, in order to hedge him in, and the desire to break down his spirit grew in them, precisely as they saw proofs of the difficulty there would be in subduing it. The honor of the band was now involved in the issue, and even the fair sex lost all its sympathy with suffering in the desire to save the reputation of the tribe. The voices of the girls, soft and melodious as nature had made them, were heard mingling with the menaces of the men, and the wrongs of Sumach suddenly assumed the character of injuries inflicted on every Huron female. Yielding to this rising tumult, the men drew back a little, signifying to the females that they left the captive, for a time, in their hands, it being a common practice on such occasions for the women to endeavor to throw the victim into a rage by their taunts and revilings, and then to turn him suddenly over to the men in a state of mind that was little favorable to resisting the agony of bodily suffering. Nor was this party without the proper instruments for effecting such a purpose. Sumach had a notoriety as a scold, and one or two crones, like the She Bear, had come out with the party, most probably as the conservators of its decency and moral discipline; such things occurring in savage as well as in civilized life. It is unnecessary to repeat all that ferocity and ignorance could invent for such a purpose, the only difference between this outbreking of feminine anger, and a similar scene among ourselves, consisting in the figures of speech and the epithets, the Huron women calling their prisoner by the names of the lower and least respected animals that were known to themselves.

But Deerslayer's mind was too much occupied to permit him to be disturbed by the abuse of excited hags, and their rage necessarily increasing with his indifference, as his indifference increased with their rage, the furies soon rendered themselves impotent by their own excesses. Perceiving that the attempt was a complete failure, the warriors interfered to put a stop to this scene, and this so much the more because preparations were now seriously making for the commencement of the real tortures, or that which would put the fortitude of the sufferer to the test of severe bodily pain. A sudden and unlooked for announcement, that proceeded from one of the look-outs, a boy ten or twelve years old, however, put a momentary check to the whole proceedings. As this interruption has a close connection with the dénouement of our story, it shall be given in a separate chapter.



## CHAPTER 30

*"So deem'st thou — so each mortal deems  
Of that which is from that which seems;  
But other harvest here  
Than that which peasant's scythe demands,  
Was gather'd in by sterner hands,  
With bayonet, blade, and spear."*

—SCOTT, "THE FIELD OF WATERLOO," V.1-6.

**I**t exceeded Deerslayer's power to ascertain what had produced the sudden pause in the movements of his enemies, until the fact was revealed in the due course of events. He perceived that much agitation prevailed among the women in particular, while the warriors rested on their arms in a sort of dignified expectation. It was plain no alarm was excited, though it was not equally apparent that a friendly occurrence produced the delay. Rivenoak was evidently apprised of all, and by a gesture of his arm he appeared to direct the circle to remain unbroken, and for each person to await the issue in the situation he or she then occupied. It required but a minute or two to bring an explanation of this singular and mysterious pause, which was soon terminated by the appearance of Judith on the exterior of the line of bodies, and her ready admission within its circle.

If Deerslayer was startled by this unexpected arrival, well knowing that the quick witted girl could claim none of that exemption from the penalties of captivity that was so cheerfully accorded to her feebler minded sister, he was equally astonished at the guise in which she came. All her ordinary forest attire, neat and becoming as this usually was, had been laid aside for the brocade that has been already mentioned, and which had once before wrought so great and magical an effect in her appearance. Nor was this all. Accustomed to see the ladies of the garrison in the formal, gala attire of the day, and familiar with the more critical niceties of these matters, the girl had managed to complete her dress in a way to leave nothing strikingly defective in its details, or even to betray an incongruity that would have been detected by one practised in the mysteries of the toilet. Head, feet, arms, hands, bust, and drapery, were all in harmony, as female attire was then deemed attractive and harmonious, and the end she aimed at, that of imposing on the uninstructed senses of the savages, by causing them to believe their guest was a woman of rank and importance, might well have succeeded with those whose habits had taught them to discriminate between persons. Judith, in addition to her rare native beauty, had a singular grace of person, and her mother had imparted enough of her own deportment to prevent any striking or offensive vulgarity of manner; so that, sooth to say, the gorgeous dress might have been worse bestowed in nearly every particular. Had it been displayed in a capital, a thousand might have worn it, before one could have been found to do more credit to its gay colours, glossy satins, and rich laces, than the beautiful creature whose person it now aided to adorn. The effect of such an apparition had not been miscalculated. The instant Judith found herself within the circle, she was, in a degree, compensated for the fearful personal risk she ran, by the unequivocal sensation of surprise and admiration produced by her appearance. The grim old warriors uttered their favorite exclamation "hugh!" The younger men were still more sensibly overcome, and even the women were not backward in letting open manifestations of pleasure escape them. It was seldom that these untutored children of the forest had ever seen any white female above the commonest sort, and, as to dress, never before had so much splendor shone before their eyes. The gayest uniforms of both French and English seemed dull compared with the lustre of the brocade, and while the rare personal beauty of the wearer added to the effect produced by its hues, the attire did not fail to adorn that beauty in a way which surpassed even the hopes of its wearer. Deerslayer himself was astounded, and this quite as much by the brilliant picture the girl presented, as at the indifference to consequences with which she had braved the danger of the step she had taken. Under such circumstances, all waited for the visitor to explain her object, which to most of the spectators seemed as inexplicable as her appearance.

"Which of these warriors is the principal chief?" demanded Judith of Deerslayer, as soon as she found it was expected that she should open the communications; "my errand is too important to be delivered to any of inferior rank. First explain to the Hurons what I say; then give an answer to the question I have put."

Deerslayer quietly complied, his auditors greedily listening to the interpretation of the first words that fell from so extraordinary a vision. The demand seemed perfectly in character for one who had every appearance of an exalted rank, herself. Rivenoak gave an appropriate reply, by presenting himself before his fair visitor in a way to leave no doubt that he was entitled to all the consideration he claimed.

"I can believe this, Huron," resumed Judith, enacting her assumed part with a steadiness and dignity that did credit to her powers of imitation, for she strove to impart to her manner the condescending courtesy she had once observed in the wife of a general officer, at a similar though a more amicable scene: "I can believe you to be the principal person of this party; I see in your countenance the marks of thought and reflection. To you, then, I must make my communication."

"Let the Flower of the Woods speak," returned the old chief courteously, as soon as her address had been translated so that all might understand it — "If her words are as pleasant as her looks, they will never quit my ears; I shall hear them long after the winter of Canada has killed all the flowers, and frozen all the speeches of summer."

This admiration was grateful to one constituted like Judith, and contributed to aid her self-possession, quite as much as it fed her vanity. Smiling involuntarily, or in spite of her wish to seem reserved, she proceeded in her plot.

"Now, Huron," she continued, "listen to my words. Your eyes tell you that I am no common woman. I will not say I am queen of this country; she is afar off, in a distant land; but under our gracious monarchs, there are many degrees of rank; one of these I fill. What that rank is precisely, it is unnecessary for me to say, since you would not understand it. For that information you must trust your eyes. You see what I am; you must feel that in listening to my words, you listen to one who can be your friend, or your enemy, as you treat her."

This was well uttered, with a due attention to manner and a steadiness of tone that was really surprising, considering all the circumstances of the case. It was well, though simply rendered into the Indian dialect too, and it was received with a respect and gravity that augured favourably for the girl's success. But Indian thought is not easily traced to its sources. Judith waited with anxiety to hear the answer, filled with hope even while she doubted. Rivenoak was a ready speaker, and he answered as promptly as comported with the notions of Indian decorum; that peculiar people seeming to think a short delay respectful, inasmuch as it manifests that the words already heard have been duly weighed.

"My daughter is handsomer than the wild roses of Ontario; her voice is pleasant to the ear as the song of the wren," answered the cautious and wily chief, who of all the band stood alone in not being fully imposed on by the magnificent and unusual appearance of Judith; but who distrusted even while he wondered: "the humming bird is not much larger than the bee; yet, its feathers are as gay as the tail of the peacock. The Great Spirit sometimes puts very bright clothes on very little animals. Still He covers the Moose with coarse hair. These things are beyond the understanding of poor Indians, who can only comprehend what they see and hear. No doubt my daughter has a very large wigwam somewhere about the lake; the Hurons have not found it, on account of their ignorance?"

"I have told you, chief, that it would be useless to state my rank and residence, in as much as you would not comprehend them. You must trust to your eyes for this knowledge; what red man is there who cannot see? This blanket that I wear is not the blanket of a common squaw; these ornaments are such as the wives and daughters of chiefs only appear in. Now, listen and hear why I have come alone among your people, and hearken to the errand that has brought me here. The Yengeese have young men, as well as the Hurons; and plenty of them, too; this you well know."

"The Yengeese are as plenty as the leaves on the trees! This every Huron knows, and feels."

"I understand you, chief. Had I brought a party with me, it might have caused trouble. My young men and your young men would have looked angrily at each other; especially had my young men seen that pale-face bound for the torture. He is a great hunter, and is much loved by all the garrisons, far and near. There would have been blows about him, and the trail of the Iroquois back to the Canadas would have been marked with blood."

"There is so much blood on it, now," returned the chief, gloomily, "that it blinds our eyes. My young men see that it is all Huron."

"No doubt; and more Huron blood would be spilt had I come surrounded with pale-faces. I have heard of Rivenoak, and have thought it would be better to send him back in peace to his village, that he might leave his women and children behind him; if he then wished to come for our scalps, we would meet him. He loves animals made of ivory, and little rifles. See; I have brought some with me to show him. I am his friend. When he has packed up these things among his goods, he will start for his village, before any of my young men can overtake him, and then he will show his people in Canada what riches they can come to seek, now that our great fathers, across the Salt Lake, have sent each other the war hatchet. I will lead back with me this great hunter, of whom I have need to keep my house in venison."

Judith, who was sufficiently familiar with Indian phraseology, endeavored to express her ideas in the sententious manner common to those people, and she succeeded even beyond her own expectations. Deerslayer did her full justice in

the translation, and this so much the more readily, since the girl carefully abstained from uttering any direct untruth; a homage she paid to the young man's known aversion to falsehood, which he deemed a meanness altogether unworthy of a white man's gifts. The offering of the two remaining elephants, and of the pistols already mentioned, one of which was all the worse for the recent accident, produced a lively sensation among the Hurons, generally, though Rivenoak received it coldly, notwithstanding the delight with which he had first discovered the probable existence of a creature with two tails. In a word, this cool and sagacious savage was not so easily imposed on as his followers, and with a sentiment of honor that half the civilized world would have deemed supererogatory, he declined the acceptance of a bribe that he felt no disposition to earn by a compliance with the donor's wishes.

"Let my daughter keep her two-tailed hog, to eat when venison is scarce," he drily answered, "and the little gun, which has two muzzles. The Hurons will kill deer when they are hungry, and they have long rifles to fight with. This hunter cannot quit my young men now; they wish to know if he is as stouthearted as he boasts himself to be."

"That I deny, Huron —" interrupted Deerslayer, with warmth — "Yes, that I downright deny, as ag'in truth and reason. No man has heard me boast, and no man shall, though ye flay me alive, and then roast the quivering flesh, with your own infernal devices and cruelties! I may be humble, and misfortunate, and your prisoner; but I'm no boaster, by my very gifts."

"My young pale-face boasts he is no boaster," returned the crafty chief: "he must be right. I hear a strange bird singing. It has very rich feathers. No Huron ever before saw such feathers! They will be ashamed to go back to their village, and tell their people that they let their prisoner go on account of the song of this strange bird and not be able to give the name of the bird. They do not know how to say whether it is a wren, or a cat bird. This would be a great disgrace; my young men would not be allowed to travel in the woods without taking their mothers with them, to tell them the names of the birds!"

"You can ask my name of your prisoner," returned the girl. "It is Judith; and there is a great deal of the history of Judith in the pale-face's best book, the Bible. If I am a bird of fine feathers, I have also my name."

"No," answered the wily Huron, betraying the artifice he had so long practised, by speaking in English with tolerable accuracy, "I not ask prisoner. He tired; he want rest. I ask my daughter, with feeble mind. She speak truth. Come here, daughter; you answer. Your name, Hetty?"

"Yes, that's what they call me," returned the girl, "though it's written Esther in the Bible."

"He write him in bible, too! All write in bible. No matter — what her name?"

"That's Judith, and it's so written in the Bible, though father sometimes called her Jude. That's my sister Judith. Thomas Hutter's daughter — Thomas Hutter, whom you called the Muskrat; though he was no muskrat, but a man like yourselves — he lived in a house on the water, and that was enough for you."

A smile of triumph gleamed on the hard wrinkled countenance of the chief, when he found how completely his appeal to the truth-loving Hetty had succeeded. As for Judith, herself, the moment her sister was questioned, she saw that all was lost; for no sign, or even intreaty could have induced the right feeling girl to utter a falsehood. To attempt to impose a daughter of the Muskrat on the savages as a princess, or a great lady, she knew would be idle, and she saw her bold and ingenious expedient for liberating the captive fail, through one of the simplest and most natural causes that could be imagined. She turned her eye on Deerslayer, therefore, as if imploring him to interfere to save them both.

"It will not do, Judith," said the young man, in answer to this appeal, which he understood, though he saw its uselessness; "it will not do. 'Twas a bold idea, and fit for a general's lady, but yonder Mingo" Rivenoak had withdrawn to a little distance, and was out of earshot — "but yonder Mingo is an uncommon man, and not to be deceived by any unnat'ral sarcumvention. Things must come afore him in their right order, to draw a cloud afore his eyes! 'Twas too much to attempt making him fancy that a queen, or a great lady, lived in these mountains, and no doubt he thinks the fine clothes you wear is some of the plunder of your own father — or, at least, of him who once passed for your father; as quite likely it was, if all they say is true."

"At all events, Deerslayer, my presence here will save you for a time. They will hardly attempt torturing you before my face!"

"Why not, Judith? Do you think they will treat a woman of the pale faces more tenderly than they treat their own? It's true that your sex will most likely save you from the torments, but it will not save your liberty, and may not save your scalp. I wish you had not come, my good Judith; it can do no good to me, while it may do great harm to yourself."

"I can share your fate," the girl answered with generous enthusiasm. "They shall not injure you while I stand by, if in

my power to prevent it — besides —”

“Besides, what, Judith? What means have you to stop Injin cruelties, or to avert Injin deviltries?”

“None, perhaps, Deerslayer,” answered the girl, with firmness, “but I can suffer with my friends — die with them if necessary.”

“Ah! Judith — suffer you may; but die you will not, until the Lord’s time shall come. It’s little likely that one of your sex and beauty will meet with a harder fate than to become the wife of a chief, if, indeed your white inclinations can stoop to match with an Injin. ‘Twould have been better had you staid in the Ark, or the castle, but what has been done, is done. You was about to say something, when you stopped at ‘besides’?”

“It might not be safe to mention it here, Deerslayer,” the girl hurriedly answered, moving past him carelessly, that she might speak in a lower tone; “half an hour is all in all to us. None of your friends are idle.”

The hunter replied merely by a grateful look. Then he turned towards his enemies, as if ready again to face their torments. A short consultation had passed among the elders of the band, and by this time they also were prepared with their decision. The merciful purpose of Rivenoak had been much weakened by the artifice of Judith, which, failing of its real object, was likely to produce results the very opposite of those she had anticipated. This was natural; the feeling being aided by the resentment of an Indian who found how near he had been to becoming the dupe of an inexperienced girl. By this time, Judith’s real character was fully understood, the wide spread reputation of her beauty contributing to the exposure. As for the unusual attire, it was confounded with the profound mystery of the animals with two tails, and for the moment lost its influence.

When Rivenoak, therefore, faced the captive again, it was with an altered countenance. He had abandoned the wish of saving him, and was no longer disposed to retard the more serious part of the torture. This change of sentiment was, in effect, communicated to the young men, who were already eagerly engaged in making their preparations for the contemplated scene. Fragments of dried wood were rapidly collected near the sapling, the splinters which it was intended to thrust into the flesh of the victim, previously to lighting, were all collected, and the thongs were already produced that were again to bind him to the tree. All this was done in profound silence, Judith watching every movement with breathless expectation, while Deerslayer himself stood seemingly as unmoved as one of the pines of the hills. When the warriors advanced to bind him, however, the young man glanced at Judith, as if to enquire whether resistance or submission were most advisable. By a significant gesture she counselled the last, and, in a minute, he was once more fastened to the tree, a helpless object of any insult, or wrong, that might be offered. So eagerly did every one now act, that nothing was said. The fire was immediately lighted in the pile, and the end of all was anxiously expected.

It was not the intention of the Hurons absolutely to destroy the life of their victim by means of fire. They designed merely to put his physical fortitude to the severest proofs it could endure, short of that extremity. In the end, they fully intended to carry his scalp with them into their village, but it was their wish first to break down his resolution, and to reduce him to the level of a complaining sufferer. With this view, the pile of brush and branches had been placed at a proper distance, or, one at which it was thought the heat would soon become intolerable, though it might not be immediately dangerous. As often happened, however, on these occasions, this distance had been miscalculated, and the flames began to wave their forked tongues in a proximity to the face of the victim, that would have proved fatal, in another instant, had not Hetty rushed through the crowd, armed with a stick, and scattered the blazing pile in a dozen directions. More than one hand was raised to strike this presumptuous intruder to the earth, but the chiefs prevented the blows, by reminding their irritated followers of the state of her mind. Hetty, herself, was insensible to the risk she ran, but, as soon as she had performed this bold act, she stood looking about her, in frowning resentment, as if to rebuke the crowd of attentive savages for their cruelty.

“God bless you, dearest sister, for that brave and ready act!” murmured Judith, herself unnerved so much as to be incapable of exertion — “Heaven, itself, has sent you on its holy errand.”

“’Twas well meant, Judith —” rejoined the victim — “’twas excellently meant, and ’twas timely; though it may prove untimely in the end! What is to come to pass, must come to pass soon, or ’twill quickly be too late. Had I drawn in one mouthful of that flame in breathing, the power of man could not save my life, and you see that, this time, they’ve so bound my forehead, as not to leave my head the smallest chance. ’Twas well meant, but it might have been more merciful to let the flames act their part.”

“Cruel, heartless Hurons!” exclaimed the still indignant Hetty — “Would you burn a man and a Christian, as you would burn a log of wood! Do you never read your Bibles? Or do you think God will forget such things?”

A gesture from Rivenoak caused the scattered brands to be collected. Fresh wood was brought, even the women and children busying themselves eagerly, in the gathering of dried sticks. The flame was just kindling a second time, when an Indian female pushed through the circle, advanced to the heap, and with her foot dashed aside the lighted twigs in time to prevent the conflagration. A yell followed this second disappointment, but when the offender turned towards the circle, and presented the countenance of Hist, it was succeeded by a common exclamation of pleasure and surprise. For a minute, all thought of pursuing the business in hand was forgotten. Young and old crowded around the girl, in haste to demand an explanation of her sudden and unlooked-for return. It was at this critical instant that Hist spoke to Judith in a low voice, placed some small object unseen in her hand, and then turned to meet the salutations of the Huron girls, with whom she was personally a great favorite. Judith recovered her self possession, and acted promptly. The small, keen edged knife that Hist had given to the other, was passed by the latter into the hands of Hetty, as the safest and least suspected medium of transferring it to Deerslayer. But the feeble intellect of the last defeated the well-grounded hopes of all three. Instead of first cutting loose the hands of the victim, and then concealing the knife in his clothes, in readiness for action at the most available instant, she went to work herself, with earnestness and simplicity, to cut the thongs that bound his head, that he might not again be in danger of inhaling flames. Of course this deliberate procedure was seen, and the hands of Hetty were arrested, ere she had more than liberated the upper portion of the captive’s body, not including his arms below the elbows. This discovery at once pointed distrust towards Hist, and to Judith’s surprise, when questioned on the subject, that spirited girl was not disposed to deny her agency in what had passed.

“Why should I not help the Deerslayer?” the girl demanded, in the tones of a firm minded woman. “He is the brother of a Delaware chief; my heart is all Delaware. Come forth, miserable Briarthorn, and wash the Iroquois paint from your face; stand before the Hurons the crow that you are. You would eat the carrion of your own dead, rather than starve. Put him face to face with Deerslayer, chiefs and warriors; I will show you how great a knave you have been keeping in your tribe.”

This bold language, uttered in their own dialect and with a manner full of confidence, produced a deep sensation among the Hurons. Treachery is always liable to distrust, and though the recreant Briarthorn had endeavoured to serve the enemy well, his exertions and assiduities had gained for him little more than toleration. His wish to obtain Hist for a wife had first induced him to betray her, and his own people, but serious rivals to his first project had risen up among his new friends, weakening still more their sympathies with treason. In a word, Briarthorn had been barely permitted to remain in the Huron encampment, where he was as closely and as jealously watched as Hist, herself, seldom appearing before the chiefs, and sedulously keeping out of view of Deerslayer, who, until this moment, was ignorant even of his presence. Thus summoned, however, it was impossible to remain in the back ground. “Wash the Iroquois paint from his face,” he did not, for when he stood in the centre of the circle, he was so disguised in these new colours, that at first, the hunter did not recognise him. He assumed an air of defiance, notwithstanding, and haughtily demanded what any could say against “Briarthorn.”

“Ask yourself that,” continued Hist with spirit, though her manner grew less concentrated, and there was a slight air of abstraction that became observable to Deerslayer and Judith, if to no others—“Ask that of your own heart, sneaking woodchuck of the Delawares; come not here with the face of an innocent man. Go look into the spring; see the colours of your enemies on your lying skin; then come back and boast how you run from your tribe and took the blanket of the French for your covering! Paint yourself as bright as the humming bird, you will still be black as the crow!”

Hist had been so uniformly gentle, while living with the Hurons, that they now listened to her language with surprise. As for the delinquent, his blood boiled in his veins, and it was well for the pretty speaker that it was not in his power to execute the revenge he burned to inflict on her, in spite of his pretended love.

“Who wishes Briarthorn?” he sternly asked — “If this pale-face is tired of life, if afraid of Indian torments, speak, Rivenoak; I will send him after the warriors we have lost.”

“No, chiefs — no, Rivenoak —” eagerly interrupted Hist — “Deerslayer fears nothing; least of all a crow! Unbind him — cut his withes, place him face to face with this cawing bird; then let us see which is tired of life!”

Hist made a forward movement, as if to take a knife from a young man, and perform the office she had mentioned in



person, but an aged warrior interposed, at a sign from Rivenoak. This chief watched all the girl did with distrust, for, even while speaking in her most boastful language, and in the steadiest manner, there was an air of uncertainty and expectation about her, that could not escape so close an observer. She acted well; but two or three of the old men were equally satisfied that it was merely acting. Her proposal to release Deerslayer, therefore, was rejected, and the disappointed Hist found herself driven back from the sapling, at the very moment she fancied herself about to be successful. At the same time, the circle, which had got to be crowded and confused, was enlarged, and brought once more into order. Rivenoak now announced the intention of the old men again to proceed, the delay having continued long enough, and leading to no result.

“Stop Huron — stay chiefs! —” exclaimed Judith, scarce knowing what she said, or why she interposed, unless to obtain time. “For God’s sake, a single minute longer —”

The words were cut short, by another and a still more extraordinary interruption. A young Indian came bounding through the Huron ranks, leaping into the very centre of the circle, in a way to denote the utmost confidence, or a temerity bordering on foolhardiness. Five or six sentinels were still watching the lake at different and distant points, and it was the first impression of Rivenoak that one of these had come in, with tidings of import. Still the movements of the stranger were so rapid, and his war dress, which scarcely left him more drapery than an antique statue, had so little distinguishing about it, that, at the first moment, it was impossible to ascertain whether he were friend or foe. Three leaps carried this warrior to the side of Deerslayer, whose withes were cut in the twinkling of an eye, with a quickness and precision that left the prisoner perfect master of his limbs. Not till this was effected did the stranger bestow a glance on any other object; then he turned and showed the astonished Hurons the noble brow, fine person, and eagle eye, of a young warrior, in the paint and panoply of a Delaware. He held a rifle in each hand, the butts of both resting on the earth, while from one dangled its proper pouch and horn. This was Killdeer which, even as he looked boldly and in defiance at the crowd around him, he suffered to fall back into the hands of its proper owner. The presence of two armed men, though it was in their midst, startled the Hurons. Their rifles were scattered about against the different trees, and their only weapons were their knives and tomahawks. Still they had too much self-possession to betray fear. It was little likely that so small a force would assail so strong a band, and each man expected some extraordinary proposition to succeed so decisive a step. The stranger did not seem disposed to disappoint them; he prepared to speak.

“Hurons,” he said, “this earth is very big. The Great Lakes are big, too; there is room beyond them for the Iroquois; there is room for the Delawares on this side. I am Chingachgook the Son of Uncas; the kinsman of Tamenund. This is my betrothed; that pale-face is my friend. My heart was heavy, when I missed him; I followed him to your camp, to see that no harm happened to him. All the Delaware girls are waiting for Wah; they wonder that she stays away so long. Come, let us say farewell, and go on our path.”

“Hurons, this is your mortal enemy, the Great Serpent of them you hate!” cried Briarthorn. “If he escape, blood will be in your moccasin prints, from this spot to the Canadas. I am all Huron!” As the last words were uttered, the traitor cast his knife at the naked breast of the Delaware. A quick movement of the arm, on the part of Hist, who stood near, turned aside the blow, the dangerous weapon burying its point in a pine. At the next instant, a similar weapon glanced from the hand of the Serpent, and quivered in the recreant’s heart. A minute had scarcely elapsed from the moment in which Chingachgook bounded into the circle, and that in which Briarthorn fell, like a log, dead in his tracks. The rapidity of events had prevented the Hurons from acting; but this catastrophe permitted no farther delay. A common exclamation followed, and the whole party was in motion. At this instant a sound unusual to the woods was heard, and every Huron, male and female, paused to listen, with ears erect and faces filled with expectation. The sound was regular and heavy, as if the earth were struck with beetles. Objects became visible among the trees of the background, and a body of troops was seen advancing with measured tread. They came upon the charge, the scarlet of the King’s livery shining among the bright green foliage of the forest.

The scene that followed is not easily described. It was one in which wild confusion, despair, and frenzied efforts, were so blended as to destroy the unity and distinctness of the action. A general yell burst from the enclosed Hurons; it was succeeded by the hearty cheers of England. Still not a musket or rifle was fired, though that steady, measured tramp continued, and the bayonet was seen gleaming in advance of a line that counted nearly sixty men. The Hurons were taken at a fearful disadvantage. On three sides was the water, while their formidable and trained foes cut them off from flight on the fourth. Each warrior rushed for his arms, and then all on the point, man, woman and child, eagerly sought the covers.

In this scene of confusion and dismay, however, nothing could surpass the discretion and coolness of Deerslayer. His first care was to place Judith and Hist behind trees, and he looked for Hetty; but she had been hurried away in the crowd of Huron women. This effected, he threw himself on a flank of the retiring Hurons, who were inclining off towards the southern margin of the point, in the hope of escaping through the water. Deerslayer watched his opportunity, and finding two of his recent tormentors in a range, his rifle first broke the silence of the terrific scene. The bullet brought down both at one discharge. This drew a general fire from the Hurons, and the rifle and war cry of the Serpent were heard in the clamor. Still the trained men returned no answering volley, the whoop and piece of Hurry alone being heard on their side, if we except the short, prompt word of authority, and that heavy, measured and menacing tread. Presently, however, the shrieks, groans, and denunciations that usually accompany the use of the bayonet followed. That terrible and deadly weapon was glutted in vengeance. The scene that succeeded was one of those of which so many have occurred in our own times, in which neither age nor sex forms an exemption to the lot of a savage warfare.



## CHAPTER 31

*"The flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow dies;  
All that we wish to stay,  
Tempt and then flies:  
What is this world's delight?  
Lightning that mocks the night,  
Brief even as bright."*

—SHELLEY, "MUTABILITY," 11. i-v.

The picture next presented, by the point of land that the unfortunate Hurons had selected for their last place of encampment, need scarcely be laid before the eyes of the reader. Happily for the more tender-minded and the more timid, the trunks of the trees, the leaves, and the smoke had concealed much of that which passed, and night shortly after drew its veil over the lake, and the whole of that seemingly interminable wilderness; which may be said to have then stretched, with few and immaterial interruptions, from the banks of the Hudson to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Our business carries us into the following day, when light returned upon the earth, as sunny and as smiling as if nothing extraordinary had occurred.

When the sun rose on the following morning, every sign of hostility and alarm had vanished from the basin of the Glimmerglass. The frightful event of the preceding evening had left no impression on the placid sheet, and the untiring hours pursued their course in the placid order prescribed by the powerful hand that set them in motion. The birds were again skimming the water, or were seen poised on the wing, high above the tops of the tallest pines of the mountains, ready to make their swoops, in obedience to the irresistible law of their natures. In a word, nothing was changed, but the air of movement and life that prevailed in and around the castle. Here, indeed, was an alteration that must have struck the least observant eye. A sentinel, who wore the light infantry uniform of a royal regiment, paced the platform with measured tread, and some twenty more of the same corps lounged about the place, or were seated in the ark. Their arms were stacked under the eye of their comrade on post. Two officers stood examining the shore, with the ship's glass so often mentioned. Their looks were directed to that fatal point, where scarlet coats were still to be seen gliding among the trees, and where the magnifying power of the instrument also showed spades at work, and the sad duty of interment going on. Several of the common men bore proofs on their persons that their enemies had not been overcome entirely without resistance, and the youngest of the two officers on the platform wore an arm in a sling. His companion, who commanded the party, had been more fortunate. He it was who used the glass, in making the reconnoissances in which the two were engaged.

A sergeant approached to make a report. He addressed the senior of these officers as Capt. Warley, while the other was alluded to as Mr., which was equivalent to Ensign Thornton. The former it will at once be seen was the officer who had been named with so much feeling in the parting dialogue between Judith and Hurry. He was, in truth, the very individual with whom the scandal of the garrisons had most freely connected the name of this beautiful but indiscreet girl. He was a hard featured, red faced man of about five and thirty; but of a military carriage, and with an air of fashion that might easily impose on the imagination of one as ignorant of the world as Judith.

"Craig is covering us with benedictions," observed this person to his young ensign, with an air of indifference, as he shut the glass and handed it to his servant; "to say the truth, not without reason; it is certainly more agreeable to be here in attendance on Miss Judith Hutter, than to be burying Indians on a point of the lake, however romantic the position, or brilliant the victory. By the way, Wright — is Davis still living?"

"He died about ten minutes since, your honor," returned the sergeant to whom this question was addressed. "I knew how it would be, as soon as I found the bullet had touched the stomach. I never knew a man who could hold out long, if he had a hole in his stomach."

"No; it is rather inconvenient for carrying away any thing very nourishing," observed Warley, gaping. "This being up two nights de suite, Arthur, plays the devil with a man's faculties! I'm as stupid as one of those Dutch parsons on the Mohawk — I hope your arm is not painful, my dear boy?"

"It draws a few grimaces from me, sir, as I suppose you see," answered the youth, laughing at the very moment his countenance was a little awry with pain. "But it may be borne. I suppose Graham can spare a few minutes, soon, to look at my hurt."

"She is a lovely creature, this Judith Hutter, after all, Thornton; and it shall not be my fault if she is not seen and admired in the Parks!" resumed Warley, who thought little of his companion's wound — "your arm, eh! Quite True — Go into the ark, sergeant, and tell Dr. Graham I desire he would look at Mr. Thornton's injury, as soon as he has done with the poor fellow with the broken leg. A lovely creature! and she looked like a queen in that brocade dress in which we met her. I find all changed here; father and mother both gone, the sister dying, if not dead, and none of the family left, but the beauty! This has been a lucky expedition all round, and promises to terminate better than Indian skirmishes in general."

"Am I to suppose, sir, that you are about to desert your colours, in the great corps of bachelors, and close the campaign with matrimony?"

"I, Tom Warley, turn Benedict! Faith, my dear boy, you little know the corps you speak of, if you fancy any such thing. I do suppose there are women in the colonies that a captain of Light Infantry need not disdain; but they are not to be found up here, on a mountain lake; or even down on the Dutch river where we are posted. It is true, my uncle, the general, once did me the favor to choose a wife for me in Yorkshire; but she had no beauty — and I would not marry a princess, unless she were handsome."

"If handsome, you would marry a beggar?"

"Ay, these are the notions of an ensign! Love in a cottage — doors — and windows — the old story, for the hundredth time. The 20th — don't marry. We are not a marrying corps, my dear boy. There's the Colonel, Old Sir Edwin — — now; though a full General he has never thought of a wife; and when a man gets as high as a Lieutenant General, without matrimony, he is pretty safe. Then the Lieutenant Colonel is confirmed, as I tell my cousin the bishop. The Major is a widower, having tried matrimony for twelve months in his youth, and we look upon him, now, as one of our most certain men. Out of ten captains, but one is in the dilemma, and he, poor devil, is always kept at regimental headquarters, as a sort of memento mori, to the young men as they join. As for the subalterns, not one has ever yet had the audacity to speak of introducing a wife into the regiment. But your arm is troublesome, and we'll go ourselves and see what has become of Graham."

The surgeon who had accompanied the party was employed very differently from what the captain supposed. When the assault was over, and the dead and wounded were collected, poor Hetty had been found among the latter. A rifle bullet had passed through her body, inflicting an injury that was known at a glance to be mortal. How this wound was received, no one knew; it was probably one of those casualties that ever accompany scenes like that related in the previous chapter.

The Sumach, all the elderly women, and some of the Huron girls, had fallen by the bayonet, either in the confusion of the melee, or from the difficulty of distinguishing the sexes when the dress was so simple. Much the greater portion of the warriors suffered on the spot. A few had escaped, however, and two or three had been taken unharmed. As for the wounded, the bayonet saved the surgeon much trouble. Rivenoak had escaped with life and limb, but was injured and a prisoner. As Captain Warley and his ensign went into the Ark they passed him, seated in dignified silence in one end of the scow, his head and leg bound, but betraying no visible sign of despondency or despair. That he mourned the loss of his tribe is certain; still he did it in a manner that best became a warrior and a chief.

The two soldiers found their surgeon in the principal room of the Ark. He was just quitting the pallet of Hetty, with an expression of sorrowful regret on his hard, pock-marked Scottish features, that it was not usual to see there. All his assiduity had been useless, and he was compelled reluctantly to abandon the expectation of seeing the girl survive many hours. Dr. Graham was accustomed to death-bed scenes, and ordinarily they produced but little impression on him. In all that relates to religion, his was one of those minds which, in consequence of reasoning much on material things, logically and consecutively, and overlooking the total want of premises which such a theory must ever possess, through its want of a primary agent, had become sceptical; leaving a vague opinion concerning the origin of things, that, with high pretensions to philosophy, failed in the first of all philosophical principles, a cause. To him religious dependence appeared a weakness, but when he found one gentle and young like Hetty, with a mind beneath the level of her race, sustained at such a moment by these pious sentiments, and that, too, in a way that many a sturdy warrior and reputed hero might have looked upon with envy, he found himself affected by the sight to a degree that he would have been ashamed to confess. Edinburgh and Aberdeen, then as now, supplied no small portion of the medical men of the British service, and Dr. Graham, as indeed his name and countenance equally indicated, was, by birth a North Briton.

"Here is an extraordinary exhibition for a forest, and one but half-gifted with reason," he observed with a decided

Scotch accent, as Warley and the ensign entered; "I just hope, gentlemen, that when we three shall be called on to quit the 20th, we may be found as resigned to go on the half pay of another existence, as this poor demented chiel!"

"Is there no hope that she can survive the hurt?" demanded Warley, turning his eyes towards the pallid Judith, on whose cheeks, however, two large spots of red had settled as soon as he came into the cabin.

"No more than there is for Chairlie Stuart! Approach and judge for yourselves, gentlemen; ye'll see faith exemplified in an exceeding and wonderful manner. There is a sort of arbitrium between life and death, in actual conflict in the poor girl's mind, that renders her an interesting study to a philosopher. Mr. Thornton, I'm at your service, now; we can just look at the arm in the next room, while we speculate as much as we please on the operations and sinuosities of the human mind."

The surgeon and ensign retired, and Warley had an opportunity of looking about him more at leisure, and with a better understanding of the nature and feelings of the group collected in the cabin. Poor Hetty had been placed on her own simple bed, and was reclining in a half seated attitude, with the approaches of death on her countenance, though they were singularly dimmed by the lustre of an expression in which all the intelligence of her entire being appeared to be concentrated. Judith and Hist were near her, the former seated in deep grief; the latter standing, in readiness to offer any of the gentle attentions of feminine care. Deerslayer stood at the end of the pallet, leaning on Killdeer, unharmed in person, all the fine martial ardor that had so lately glowed in his countenance having given place to the usual look of honesty and benevolence, qualities of which the expression was now softened by manly regret and pity. The Serpent was in the background of the picture, erect, and motionless as a statue; but so observant that not a look of the eye escaped his own keen glances. Hurry completed the group, being seated on a stool near the door, like one who felt himself out of place in such a scene, but who was ashamed to quit it, unbidden.

"Who is that in scarlet?" asked Hetty, as soon as the Captain's uniform caught her eye. "Tell me, Judith, is it the friend of Hurry?"

"'Tis the officer who commands the troops that have rescued us all from the hands of the Hurons," was the low answer of the sister.

"Am I rescued, too! — I thought they said I was shot, and about to die. Mother is dead; and so is father; but you are living, Judith, and so is Hurry. I was afraid Hurry would be killed, when I heard him shouting among the soldiers."

"Never mind — never mind, dear Hetty —" interrupted Judith, sensitively alive to the preservation of her sister's secret, more, perhaps, at such a moment, than at any other. "Hurry is well, and Deerslayer is well, and the Delaware is well, too."

"How came they to shoot a poor girl like me, and let so many men go unharmed? I didn't know that the Hurons were so wicked, Judith!"

"'Twas an accident, poor Hetty; a sad accident it has been! No one would willingly have injured you."

"I'm glad of that! — I thought it strange; I am feeble minded, and the redmen have never harmed me before. I should be sorry to think that they had changed their minds. I am glad too, Judith, that they haven't hurt Hurry. Deerslayer I don't think God will suffer any one to harm. It was very fortunate the soldiers came as they did though, for fire will burn!"

"It was indeed fortunate, my sister; God's holy name be forever blessed for the mercy!"

"I dare say, Judith, you know some of the officers; you used to know so many!"

Judith made no reply; she hid her face in her hands and groaned. Hetty gazed at her in wonder; but naturally supposing her own situation was the cause of this grief, she kindly offered to console her sister.

"Don't mind me, dear Judith," said the affectionate and pure-hearted creature, "I don't suffer; if I do die, why father and mother are both dead, and what happens to them may well happen to me. You know I am of less account than any of the family; therefore few will think of me after I'm in the lake."

"No, no, no — poor, dear, dear Hetty!" exclaimed Judith, in an uncontrollable burst of sorrow, "I, at least, will ever think of you; and gladly, oh! how gladly would I exchange places with you, to be the pure, excellent, sinless creature you are!"

Until now, Captain Warley had stood leaning against the door of the cabin; when this outbreak of feeling, and perchance of penitence, however, escaped the beautiful girl, he walked slowly and thoughtfully away; even passing the ensign, then suffering under the surgeon's care, without noticing him.

"I have got my Bible here, Judith," returned her sister in a voice of triumph. "It's true, I can't read any longer, there's something the matter with my eyes — you look dim and distant — and so does Hurry, now I look at him — well, I never could have believed that Henry March would have so dull a look! What can be the reason, Judith, that I see so badly, today? I, who mother always said had the best eyes in the whole family. Yes, that was it: my mind was feeble — what people call half-witted — but my eyes were so good!"

Again Judith groaned; this time no feeling of self, no retrospect of the past caused the pain. It was the pure, heartfelt sorrow of sisterly love, heightened by a sense of the meek humility and perfect truth of the being before her. At that moment, she would gladly have given up her own life to save that of Hetty. As the last, however, was beyond the reach of human power, she felt there was nothing left her but sorrow. At this moment Warley returned to the cabin, drawn by a secret impulse he could not withstand, though he felt, just then, as if he would gladly abandon the American continent forever, were it practicable. Instead of pausing at the door, he now advanced so near the pallet of the sufferer as to come more plainly within her gaze. Hetty could still distinguish large objects, and her look soon fastened on him.

"Are you the officer that came with Hurry?" she asked. "If you are, we ought all to thank you, for, though I am hurt, the rest have saved their lives. Did Harry March tell you, where to find us, and how much need there was for your services?"

"The news of the party reached us by means of a friendly runner," returned the Captain, glad to relieve his feelings by this appearance of a friendly communication, "and I was immediately sent out to cut it off. It was fortunate, certainly, that we met Hurry Harry, as you call him, for he acted as a guide, and it was not less fortunate that we heard a firing, which I now understand was merely a shooting at the mark, for it not only quickened our march, but called us to the right side of the lake. The Delaware saw us on the shore, with the glass it would seem, and he and Hist, as I find his squaw is named, did us excellent service. It was really altogether a fortunate concurrence of circumstances, Judith."

"Talk not to me of any thing fortunate, sir," returned the girl huskily, again concealing her face. "To me the world is full of misery. I wish never to hear of marks, or rifles, or soldiers, or men, again!"

"Do you know my sister?" asked Hetty, ere the rebuked soldier had time to rally for an answer. "How came you to know that her name is Judith? You are right, for that is her name; and I am Hetty; Thomas Hutter's daughters."

"For heaven's sake, dearest sister; for my sake, beloved Hetty," interposed Judith, imploringly, "say no more of this!"

Hetty looked surprised, but accustomed to comply, she ceased her awkward and painful interrogations of Warley, bending her eyes towards the Bible which she still held between her hands, as one would cling to a casket of precious stones in a shipwreck, or a conflagration. Her mind now adverted to the future, losing sight, in a great measure, of the scenes of the past.

"We shall not long be parted, Judith," she said; "when you die, you must be brought and be buried in the lake, by the side of mother, too."

"Would to God, Hetty, that I lay there at this moment!"

"No, that cannot be, Judith; people must die before they have any right to be buried. 'Twould be wicked to bury you, or for you to bury yourself, while living. Once I thought of burying myself; God kept me from that sin."

"You! — You, Hetty Hutter, think of such an act!" exclaimed Judith, looking up in uncontrollable surprise, for she well knew nothing passed the lips of her conscientious sister, that was not religiously true.

"Yes, I did, Judith, but God has forgotten — no he forgets nothing — but he has forgiven it," returned the dying girl, with the subdued manner of a repentant child. "'Twas after mother's death; I felt I had lost the best friend I had on earth, if not the only friend. 'Tis true, you and father were kind to me, Judith, but I was so feeble-minded, I knew I should only give you trouble; and then you were so often ashamed of such a sister and daughter, and 'tis hard to live in a world where all look upon you as below them. I thought then, if I could bury myself by the side of mother, I should be happier in the lake than in the hut."

"Forgive me — pardon me, dearest Hetty — on my bended knees, I beg you to pardon me, sweet sister, if any word, or act of mine drove you to so maddening and cruel a thought!"

"Get up, Judith — kneel to God; don't kneel to me. Just so I felt when mother was dying! I remembered everything I had said and done to vex her, and could have kissed her feet for forgiveness. I think it must be so with all dying people; though, now I think of it, I don't remember to have had such feelings on account of father."

Judith arose, hid her face in her apron, and wept. A long pause — one of more than two hours — succeeded, during

which Warley entered and left the cabin several times; apparently uneasy when absent, and yet unable to remain. He issued various orders, which his men proceeded to execute, and there was an air of movement in the party, more especially as Mr. Craig, the lieutenant, had got through the unpleasant duty of burying the dead, and had sent for instructions from the shore, desiring to know what he was to do with his detachment. During this interval Hetty slept a little, and Deerslayer and Chingachgook left the Ark to confer together. But, at the end of the time mentioned, the Surgeon passed upon the platform, and with a degree of feeling his comrades had never before observed in one of his habits, he announced that the patient was rapidly drawing near her end. On receiving this intelligence the group collected again, curiosity to witness such a death — or a better feeling — drawing to the spot men who had so lately been actors in a scene seemingly of so much greater interest and moment. By this time Judith had got to be inactive through grief, and Hist alone was performing the little offices of feminine attention that are so appropriate to the sick bed. Hetty herself had undergone no other apparent change than the general failing that indicated the near approach of dissolution. All that she possessed of mind was as clear as ever, and, in some respects, her intellect perhaps was more than usually active.

“Don’t grieve for me so much, Judith,” said the gentle sufferer, after a pause in her remarks; “I shall soon see mother — I think I see her now; her face is just as sweet and smiling as it used to be! Perhaps when I’m dead, God will give me all my mind, and I shall become a more fitting companion for mother than I ever was before.”

“You will be an angel in heaven, Hetty,” sobbed the sister; “no spirit there will be more worthy of its holy residence!”

“I don’t understand it quite; still, I know it must be all true; I’ve read it in the Bible. How dark it’s becoming! Can it be night so soon? I can hardly see you at all — where is Hist?”

“I here, poor girl — Why you no see me?”

“I do see you; but I couldn’t tell whether ’twas you, or Judith. I believe I shan’t see you much longer, Hist.”

“Sorry for that, poor Hetty. Never mind — pale-face got a heaven for girl as well as for warrior.”

“Where’s the Serpent? Let me speak to him; give me his hand; so; I feel it. Delaware, you will love and cherish this young Indian woman — I know how fond she is of you; you must be fond of her. Don’t treat her as some of your people treat their wives; be a real husband to her. Now, bring Deerslayer near me; give me his hand.”

This request was complied with, and the hunter stood by the side of the pallet, submitting to the wishes of the girl with the docility of a child.

“I feel, Deerslayer,” she resumed, “though I couldn’t tell why — but I feel that you and I are not going to part for ever. ’Tis a strange feeling! I never had it before; I wonder what it comes from!”

“’Tis God encouraging you in extremity, Hetty; as such it ought to be harbored and respected. Yes, we shall meet ag’in, though it may be a long time first, and in a far distant land.”

“Do you mean to be buried in the lake, too? If so, that may account for the feeling.”

“’Tis little likely, gal; ’tis little likely; but there’s a region for Christian souls, where there’s no lakes, nor woods, they say; though why there should be none of the last, is more than I can account for; seeing that pleasantness and peace is the object in view. My grave will be found in the forest, most likely, but I hope my spirit will not be far from your’n.”

“So it must be, then. I am too weak-minded to understand these things, but I feel that you and I will meet again. Sister, where are you? I can’t see, now, anything but darkness. It must be night, surely!”

“Oh! Hetty, I am here at your side; these are my arms that are around you,” sobbed Judith. “Speak, dearest; is there anything you wish to say, or have done, in this awful moment.”

By this time Hetty’s sight had entirely failed her. Nevertheless death approached with less than usual of its horrors, as if in tenderness to one of her half-endowed faculties. She was pale as a corpse, but her breathing was easy and unbroken, while her voice, though lowered almost to a whisper, remained clear and distinct. When her sister put this question, however, a blush diffused itself over the features of the dying girl, so faint however as to be nearly imperceptible; resembling that hue of the rose which is thought to portray the tint of modesty, rather than the dye of the flower in its richer bloom. No one but Judith detected this exposure of feeling, one of the gentle expressions of womanly sensibility, even in death. On her, however, it was not lost, nor did she conceal from herself the cause.

“Hurry is here, dearest Hetty,” whispered the sister, with her face so near the sufferer as to keep the words from other ears. “Shall I tell him to come and receive your good wishes?”

A gentle pressure of the hand answered in the affirmative. Then Hurry was brought to the side of the pallet. It is probable that this handsome but rude woodsman had never before found himself so awkwardly placed, though the inclination which Hetty felt for him (a sort of secret yielding to the instincts of nature, rather than any unbecoming impulse of an ill-regulated imagination), was too pure and unobtrusive to have created the slightest suspicion of the circumstance in his mind. He allowed Judith to put his hard colossal hand between those of Hetty, and stood waiting the result in awkward silence.

"This is Hurry, dearest," whispered Judith, bending over her sister, ashamed to utter the words so as to be audible to herself. "Speak to him, and let him go."

"What shall I say, Judith?"

"Nay, whatever your own pure spirit teaches, my love. Trust to that, and you need fear nothing."

"Good bye, Hurry," murmured the girl, with a gentle pressure of his hand. "I wish you would try and be more like Deerslayer."

These words were uttered with difficulty; a faint flush succeeded them for a single instant. Then the hand was relinquished, and Hetty turned her face aside, as if done with the world. The mysterious feeling that bound her to the young man, a sentiment so gentle as to be almost imperceptible to herself, and which could never have existed at all, had her reason possessed more command over her senses, was forever lost in thoughts of a more elevated, though scarcely of a purer character.

"Of what are you thinking, my sweet sister?" whispered Judith "Tell me, that I may aid you at this moment."

"Mother — I see Mother, now, and bright beings around her in the lake. Why isn't father there? It's odd that I can see Mother, when I can't see you! Farewell, Judith."

The last words were uttered after a pause, and her sister had hung over her some time, in anxious watchfulness, before she perceived that the gentle spirit had departed. Thus died Hetty Hutter, one of those mysterious links between the material and immaterial world, which, while they appear to be deprived of so much that it is esteemed and necessary for this state of being, draw so near to, and offer so beautiful an illustration of the truth, purity, and simplicity of another.





## CHAPTER 32

*"A baron's chylde to be begylde!  
it were a cursed dede:  
To be felawe with an outlawe!  
Almighty God forbede!  
Yea, better were, the pore squy  
re alone to forest yede,  
Then ye sholde say another day,  
that by my cursed dede  
Ye were betrayed:  
wherefore, good mayde,  
the best rede that I can,  
Is, that I to the grene wode go, alone,  
a banyshed man."*

—THOMAS PERCY, 'NUTBROWNE MAYDE,' 11. 265–76 FROM RELIQUES OF

*Ancient English Poetry, Vol. II.*

The day that followed proved to be melancholy, though one of much activity. The soldiers, who had so lately been employed in interring their victims, were now called on to bury their own dead. The scene of the morning had left a saddened feeling on all the gentlemen of the party, and the rest felt the influence of a similar sensation, in a variety of ways and from many causes. Hour dragged on after hour until evening arrived, and then came the last melancholy offices in honor of poor Hetty Hutter. Her body was laid in the lake, by the side of that of the mother she had so loved and revered, the surgeon, though actually an unbeliever, so far complying with the received decencies of life as to read the funeral service over her grave, as he had previously done over those of the other Christian slain. It mattered not; that all seeing eye which reads the heart, could not fail to discriminate between the living and the dead, and the gentle soul of the unfortunate girl was already far removed beyond the errors, or deceptions, of any human ritual. These simple rites, however, were not wholly wanting in suitable accompaniments. The tears of Judith and Hist were shed freely, and Deerslayer gazed upon the limpid water, that now flowed over one whose spirit was even purer than its own mountain springs, with glistening eyes. Even the Delaware turned aside to conceal his weakness, while the common men gazed on the ceremony with wondering eyes and chastened feelings.

The business of the day closed with this pious office. By order of the commanding officer, all retired early to rest, for it was intended to begin the march homeward with the return of light. One party, indeed, bearing the wounded, the prisoners, and the trophies, had left the castle in the middle of the day under the guidance of Hurry, intending to reach the fort by shorter marches. It had been landed on the point so often mentioned, or that described in our opening pages, and, when the sun set, was already encamped on the brow of the long, broken, and ridgy hills, that fell away towards the valley of the Mohawk. The departure of this detachment had greatly simplified the duty of the succeeding day, disencumbering its march of its baggage and wounded, and otherwise leaving him who had issued the order greater liberty of action.

Judith held no communications with any but Hist, after the death of her sister, until she retired for the night. Her sorrow had been respected, and both the females had been left with the body, unintruded on, to the last moment. The rattling of the drum broke the silence of that tranquil water, and the echoes of the tattoo were heard among the mountains, so soon after the ceremony was over as to preclude the danger of interruption. That star which had been the guide of Hist, rose on a scene as silent as if the quiet of nature had never yet been disturbed by the labors or passions of man. One solitary sentinel, with his relief, paced the platform throughout the night, and morning was ushered in, as usual, by the martial beat of the reveille.

Military precision succeeded to the desultory proceedings of border men, and when a hasty and frugal breakfast was taken, the party began its movement towards the shore with a regularity and order that prevented noise or confusion. Of all the officers, Warley alone remained. Craig headed the detachment in advance, Thornton was with the wounded, and Graham accompanied his patients as a matter of course. Even the chest of Hutter, with all the more valuable of his effects, was borne away, leaving nothing behind that was worth the labor of a removal. Judith was not sorry to see that the captain respected her feelings, and that he occupied himself entirely with the duty of his command, leaving her to her own discretion and feelings. It was understood by all that the place was to be totally abandoned; but beyond this no explanations were asked or given.

The soldiers embarked in the Ark, with the captain at their head. He had enquired of Judith in what way she chose to proceed, and understanding her wish to remain with Hist to the last moment, he neither molested her with requests, nor offended her with advice. There was but one safe and familiar trail to the Mohawk, and on that, at the proper hour, he doubted not that they should meet in amity, if not in renewed intercourse. When all were on board, the sweeps were manned, and the Ark moved in its sluggish manner towards the distant point. Deerslayer and Chingachgook now lifted two of the canoes from the water, and placed them in the castle. The windows and door were then barred, and the house was left by means of the trap, in the manner already described. On quitting the palisades, Hist was seen in the remaining canoe, where the Delaware immediately joined her, and paddled away, leaving Judith standing alone on the platform. Owing to this prompt proceeding, Deerslayer found himself alone with the beautiful and still weeping mourner. Too simple to suspect anything, the young man swept the light boat round, and received its mistress in it, when he followed the course already taken by his friend. The direction to the point led diagonally past, and at no great distance from, the graves of the dead. As the canoe glided by, Judith for the first time that morning spoke to her companion. She said but little; merely uttering a simple request to stop, for a minute or two, ere she left the place.

"I may never see this spot again, Deerslayer," she said, "and it contains the bodies of my mother and sister! Is it not possible, think you, that the innocence of one of these beings may answer in the eyes of God for the salvation of both?"

"I don't understand it so, Judith, though I'm no missionary, and am but poorly taught. Each spirit answers for its own backslidings, though a hearty repentance will satisfy God's laws."

"Then must my poor poor mother be in heaven! Bitterly, bitterly has she repented of her sins, and surely her sufferings in this life ought to count as something against her sufferings in the next!"

"All this goes beyond me, Judith. I strive to do right, here, as the surest means of keeping all right, hereafter. Hetty was uncommon, as all that know'd her must allow, and her soul was as fit to consart with angels the hour it left its body, as that of any saint in the Bible!"

"I do believe you only do her justice! Alas! Alas! that there should be so great differences between those who were nursed at the same breast, slept in the same bed, and dwelt under the same roof! But, no matter — move the canoe, a little farther east, Deerslayer — the sun so dazzles my eyes that I cannot see the graves. This is Hetty's, on the right of mother's?"

"Sartain — you ask'd that of us, and all are glad to do as you wish, Judith, when you do that which is right."

The girl gazed at him near a minute, in silent attention; then she turned her eyes backward, at the castle. "This lake will soon be entirely deserted," she said, "and this, too, at a moment when it will be a more secure dwelling place than ever. What has so lately happened will prevent the Iroquois from venturing again to visit it for a long time to come."

"That it will! Yes, that may be set down as sartain. I do not mean to pass this-a-way, ag'in, so long as the war lasts, for, to my mind no Huron moccasin will leave its print on the leaves of this forest, until their traditions have forgotten to tell their young men of their disgrace and rout."

"And do you so delight in violence and bloodshed? I had thought better of you, Deerslayer — believed you one who could find his happiness in a quiet domestic home, with an attached and loving wife ready to study your wishes, and healthy and dutiful children anxious to follow in your footsteps, and to become as honest and just as yourself."

"Lord, Judith, what a tongue you're mistress of! Speech and looks go hand in hand, like, and what one can't do, the other is pretty sartain to perform! Such a gal, in a month, might spoil the stoutest warrior in the colony."

"And am I then so mistaken? Do you really love war, Deerslayer, better than the hearth, and the affections?"

"I understand your meaning, gal; yes, I do understand what you mean, I believe, though I don't think you altogether understand me. Warrior I may now call myself, I suppose, for I've both fou't and conquered, which is sufficient for the name; neither will I deny that I've feelin's for the callin', which is both manful and honorable when carried on accordin' to nat'ral gifts, but I've no relish for blood. Youth is youth, howsoever, and a Mingo is a Mingo. If the young men of this region stood by, and suffered the vagabonds to overrun the land, why, we might as well all turn Frenchers at once, and give up country and kin. I'm no fire eater, Judith, or one that likes fightin' for fightin's sake, but I can see no great difference atween givin' up territory afore a war, out of a dread of war, and givin' it up a'ter a war, because we can't help it, unless it be that the last is the most manful and honorable."

"No woman would ever wish to see her husband or brother stand by and submit to insult and wrong, Deerslayer, however she might mourn the necessity of his running into the dangers of battle. But, you've done enough already, in

clearing this region of the Hurons; since to you is principally owing the credit of our late victory. Now, listen to me patiently, and answer me with that native honesty, which it is as pleasant to regard in one of your sex, as it is unusual to meet with."

Judith paused, for now that she was on the very point of explaining herself, native modesty asserted its power, notwithstanding the encouragement and confidence she derived from the great simplicity of her companion's character. Her cheeks, which had so lately been pale, flushed, and her eyes lighted with some of their former brilliancy. Feeling gave expression to her countenance and softness to her voice, rendering her who was always beautiful, trebly seductive and winning.

"Deerslayer," she said, after a considerable pause, "this is not a moment for affectation, deception, or a want of frankness of any sort. Here, over my mother's grave, and over the grave of truth-loving, truth-telling Hetty, everything like unfair dealing seems to be out of place. I will, therefore, speak to you without any reserve, and without any dread of being misunderstood. You are not an acquaintance of a week, but it appears to me as if I had known you for years. So much, and so much that is important has taken place, within that short time, that the sorrows, and dangers, and escapes of a whole life have been crowded into a few days, and they who have suffered and acted together in such scenes, ought not to feel like strangers. I know that what I am about to say might be misunderstood by most men, but I hope for a generous construction of my course from you. We are not here, dwelling among the arts and deceptions of the settlements, but young people who have no occasion to deceive each other, in any manner or form. I hope I make myself understood?"

"Sartain, Judith; few converse better than yourself, and none more agreeable, like. Your words are as pleasant as your looks."

"It is the manner in which you have so often praised those looks, that gives me courage to proceed. Still, Deerslayer, it is not easy for one of my sex and years to forget all her lessons of infancy, all her habits, and her natural diffidence, and say openly what her heart feels!"

"Why not, Judith? Why shouldn't women as well as men deal fairly and honestly by their fellow creature's? I see no reason why you should not speak as plainly as myself, when there is any thing really important to be said."

This indomitable diffidence, which still prevented the young man from suspecting the truth, would have completely discouraged the girl, had not her whole soul, as well as her whole heart, been set upon making a desperate effort to rescue herself from a future that she dreaded with a horror as vivid as the distinctness with which she fancied she foresaw it. This motive, however, raised her above all common considerations, and she persevered even to her own surprise, if not to her great confusion.

"I will — I must deal as plainly with you, as I would with poor, dear Hetty, were that sweet child living!" she continued, turning pale instead of blushing, the high resolution by which she was prompted reversing the effect that such a procedure would ordinarily produce on one of her sex; "yes, I will smother all other feelings, in the one that is now uppermost! You love the woods and the life that we pass, here, in the wilderness, away from the dwellings and towns of the whites."

"As I loved my parents, Judith, when they was living! This very spot would be all creation to me, could this war be fairly over, once; and the settlers kept at a distance."

"Why quit it, then? It has no owner — at least none who can claim a better right than mine, and that I freely give to you. Were it a kingdom, Deerslayer, I think I should delight to say the same. Let us then return to it, after we have seen the priest at the fort, and never quit it again, until God calls us away to that world where we shall find the spirits of my poor mother and sister."

A long, thoughtful pause succeeded; Judith here covered her face with both her hands, after forcing herself to utter so plain a proposal, and Deerslayer musing equally in sorrow and surprise, on the meaning of the language he had just heard. At length the hunter broke the silence, speaking in a tone that was softened to gentleness by his desire not to offend.

"You haven't thought well of this, Judith," he said, "no, your feelin's are awakened by all that has lately happened, and believin' yourself to be without kindred in the world, you are in too great haste to find some to fill the places of them that's lost."

"Were I living in a crowd of friends, Deerslayer, I should still think as I now think — say as I now say," returned Judith, speaking with her hands still shading her lovely face.

"Thank you, gal — thank you, from the bottom of my heart. Howsoever, I am not one to take advantage of a weak

moment, when you're forgetful of your own great advantages, and fancy 'arth and all it holds is in this little canoe. No — no — Judith, 'twould be onginerous in me; what you've offered can never come to pass!"

"It all may be, and that without leaving cause of repentance to any," answered Judith, with an impetuosity of feeling and manner that at once unveiled her eyes. "We can cause the soldiers to leave our goods on the road, till we return, when they can easily be brought back to the house; the lake will be no more visited by the enemy, this war at least; all your skins may be readily sold at the garrison; there you can buy the few necessities we shall want, for I wish never to see the spot, again; and Deerslayer," added the girl smiling with a sweetness and nature that the young man found it hard to resist, "as a proof how wholly I am and wish to be yours — how completely I desire to be nothing but your wife, the very first fire that we kindle, after our return, shall be lighted with the brocade dress, and fed by every article I have that you may think unfit for the woman you wish to live with!"

"Ah's me! — you're a winning and a lovely creatur', Judith; yes, you are all that, and no one can deny it and speak truth. These pictur's are pleasant to the thoughts, but they mightn't prove so happy as you now think 'em. Forget it all, therefore, and let us paddle after the Sarpent and Hist, as if nothing had been said on the subject."

Judith was deeply mortified, and, what is more, she was profoundly grieved. Still there was a steadiness and quiet in the manner of Deerslayer that completely smothered her hopes, and told her that for once her exceeding beauty had failed to excite the admiration and homage it was wont to receive. Women are said seldom to forgive those who slight their advances, but this high spirited and impetuous girl entertained no shadow of resentment, then or ever, against the fair dealing and ingenuous hunter. At the moment, the prevailing feeling was the wish to be certain that there was no misunderstanding. After another painful pause, therefore, she brought the matter to an issue by a question too direct to admit of equivocation.

"God forbid that we lay up regrets, in after life, through my want of sincerity now," she said. "I hope we understand each other, at least. You will not accept me for a wife, Deerslayer?"

"Tis better for both that I shouldn't take advantage of your own forgetfulness, Judith. We can never marry."

"You do not love me — cannot find it in your heart, perhaps, to esteem me, Deerslayer!"

"Everything in the way of fri'ndship, Judith — everything, even to sarvices and life itself. Yes, I'd risk as much for you, at this moment, as I would risk in behalf of Hist, and that is sayin' as much as I can say of any darter of woman. I do not think I feel towards either — mind I say either, Judith — as if I wished to quit father and mother — if father and mother was livin', which, howsever, neither is — but if both was livin', I do not feel towards any woman as if I wish'd to quit 'em in order to cleave unto her."

"This is enough!" answered Judith, in a rebuked and smothered voice. "I understand all that you mean. Marry you cannot with loving, and that love you do not feel for me. Make no answer, if I am right, for I shall understand your silence. That will be painful enough of itself."

Deerslayer obeyed her, and he made no reply. For more than a minute, the girl riveted her bright eyes on him as if to read his soul, while he was playing with the water like a corrected school boy. Then Judith, herself, dropped the end of her paddle, and urged the canoe away from the spot, with a movement as reluctant as the feelings which controlled it. Deerslayer quietly aided the effort, however, and they were soon on the trackless line taken by the Delaware.

In their way to the point, not another syllable was exchanged between Deerslayer and his fair companion. As Judith sat in the bow of the canoe, her back was turned towards him, else it is probable the expression of her countenance might have induced him to venture some soothing terms of friendship and regard. Contrary to what would have been expected, resentment was still absent, though the colour frequently changed from the deep flush of mortification to the paleness of disappointment. Sorrow, deep, heart-felt sorrow, however, was the predominant emotion, and this was betrayed in a manner not to be mistaken.

As neither labored hard at the paddle, the ark had already arrived and the soldiers had disembarked before the canoe of the two loiterers reached the point. Chingachgook had preceded it, and was already some distance in the wood, at a spot where the two trails, that to the garrison and that to the villages of the Delawares, separated. The soldiers, too, had taken up their line of march, first setting the Ark adrift again, with a reckless disregard of its fate. All this Judith saw, but she heeded it not. The glimmerglass had no longer any charms for her, and when she put her foot on the strand, she immediately proceeded on the trail of the soldiers without casting a single glance behind her. Even Hist was passed

unnoticed, that modest young creature shrinking from the averted face of Judith, as if guilty herself of some wrongdoing.

"Wait you here, Sarpent," said Deerslayer as he followed in the footsteps of the dejected beauty, while passing his friend. "I will just see Judith among her party, and come and j'ine you."

A hundred yards had hid the couple from those in front, as well as those in their rear, when Judith turned, and spoke.

"This will do, Deerslayer," she said sadly. "I understand your kindness but shall not need it. In a few minutes I shall reach the soldiers. As you cannot go with me on the journey of life, I do not wish you to go further on this. But, stop — before we part, I would ask you a single question. And I require of you, as you fear God, and reverence the truth, not to deceive me in your answer. I know you do not love another and I can see but one reason why you cannot, will not love me. Tell me then, Deerslayer," The girl paused, the words she was about to utter seeming to choke her. Then rallying all her resolution, with a face that flushed and paled at every breath she drew, she continued.

"Tell me then, Deerslayer, if anything light of me, that Henry March has said, may not have influenced your feelings?"

Truth was the Deerslayer's polar star. He ever kept it in view, and it was nearly impossible for him to avoid uttering it, even when prudence demanded silence. Judith read his answer in his countenance, and with a heart nearly broken by the consciousness of undue erring, she signed to him an adieu, and buried herself in the woods. For some time Deerslayer was irresolute as to his course; but, in the end, he retraced his steps, and joined the Delaware. That night the three camped on the head waters of their own river, and the succeeding evening they entered the village of the tribe, Chingachgook and his betrothed in triumph; their companion honored and admired, but in a sorrow that it required months of activity to remove.

The war that then had its rise was stirring and bloody. The Delaware chief rose among his people, until his name was never mentioned without eulogiums, while another Uncas, the last of his race, was added to the long line of warriors who bore that distinguishing appellation. As for the Deerslayer, under the sobriquet of Hawkeye, he made his fame spread far and near, until the crack of his rifle became as terrible to the ears of the Mingos as the thunders of the Manitou. His services were soon required by the officers of the crown, and he especially attached himself in the field to one in particular, with whose after life he had a close and important connection.

Fifteen years had passed away, ere it was in the power of the Deerslayer to revisit the Glimmerglass. A peace had intervened, and it was on the eve of another and still more important war, when he and his constant friend, Chingachgook, were hastening to the forts to join their allies. A stripling accompanied them, for Hist already slumbered beneath the pines of the Delawares, and the three survivors had now become inseparable. They reached the lake just as the sun was setting. Here all was unchanged. The river still rushed through its bower of trees; the little rock was washing away, by the slow action of the waves, in the course of centuries, the mountains stood in their native dress, dark, rich and mysterious, while the sheet glistened in its solitude, a beautiful gem of the forest.

The following morning, the youth discovered one of the canoes drifted on the shore, in a state of decay. A little labor put it in a state for service, and they all embarked, with a desire to examine the place. All the points were passed, and Chingachgook pointed out to his son the spot where the Hurons had first encamped, and the point whence he had succeeded in stealing his bride. Here they even landed, but all traces of the former visit had disappeared. Next they proceeded to the scene of the battle, and there they found a few of the signs that linger around such localities. Wild beasts had disinterred many of the bodies, and human bones were bleaching in the rains of summer. Uncas regarded all with reverence and pity, though traditions were already rousing his young mind to the ambition and sternness of a warrior.

From the point, the canoe took its way toward the shoal, where the remains of the castle were still visible, a picturesque ruin. The storms of winter had long since unroofed the house, and decay had eaten into the logs. All the fastenings were untouched, but the seasons rioted in the place, as if in mockery at the attempt to exclude them. The palisades were rotting, as were the piles, and it was evident that a few more recurrences of winter, a few more gales and tempests, would sweep all into the lake, and blot the building from the face of that magnificent solitude. The graves could not be found. Either the elements had obliterated their traces, or time had caused those who looked for them to forget their position.

The Ark was discovered stranded on the eastern shore, where it had long before been driven with the prevalent northwest winds. It lay on the sandy extremity of a long low point, that is situated about two miles from the outlet, and which is itself fast disappearing before the action of the elements. The scow was filled with water, the cabin unroofed, and

the logs were decaying. Some of its coarser furniture still remained, and the heart of Deerslayer beat quick, as he found a ribbon of Judith's fluttering from a log. It recalled all her beauty, and we may add all her failings. Although the girl had never touched his heart, the Hawkeye, for so we ought now to call him, still retained a kind and sincere interest in her welfare. He tore away the ribbon, and knotted it to the stock of Killdeer, which had been the gift of the girl herself.

A few miles farther up the lake, another of the canoes was discovered, and on the point where the party finally landed, were found those which had been left there upon the shore. That in which the present navigation was made, and the one discovered on the eastern shore, had dropped through the decayed floor of the castle, drifted past the falling palisades, and had been thrown as waifs upon the beach.

From all these signs, it was probable the lake had not been visited since the occurrence of the final scene of our tale. Accident or tradition had rendered it again a spot sacred to nature, the frequent wars and the feeble population of the colonies still confining the settlements within narrow boundaries. Chingachgook and his friend left the spot with melancholy feelings. It had been the region of their First War Path, and it carried back the minds of both to scenes of tenderness, as well as to hours of triumph. They held their way towards the Mohawk in silence, however, to rush into new adventures, as stirring and as remarkable as those which had attended their opening careers on this lovely lake. At a later day they returned to the place, where the Indian found a grave.

Time and circumstances have drawn an impenetrable mystery around all else connected with the Hutterers. They lived, erred, died, and are forgotten. None connected have felt sufficient interest in the disgraced and disgracing to withdraw the veil, and a century is about to erase even the recollection of their names. The history of crime is ever revolting, and it is fortunate that few love to dwell on its incidents. The sins of the family have long since been arraigned at the judgment seat of God, or are registered for the terrible settlement of the last great day.

The same fate attended Judith. When Hawkeye reached the garrison on the Mohawk he enquired anxiously after that lovely but misguided creature. None knew her — even her person was no longer remembered. Other officers had, again and again, succeeded the Warleys and Craigs and Grahams, though an old sergeant of the garrison, who had lately come from England, was enabled to tell our hero that Sir Robert Warley lived on his paternal estates, and that there was a lady of rare beauty in the Lodge who had great influence over him, though she did not bear his name. Whether this was Judith relapsed into her early failing, or some other victim of the soldier's, Hawkeye never knew, nor would it be pleasant or profitable to inquire. We live in a world of transgressions and selfishness, and no pictures that represent us otherwise can be true, though, happily, for human nature, gleamings of that pure spirit in whose likeness man has been fashioned are to be seen, relieving its deformities, and mitigating if not excusing its crimes.

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Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 11:53

# **The Last of the Mohicans**

**James  
Fenimore  
Cooper**



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* ADELAIDE

## CHAPTER 1

*"Mine ear is open, and my heart prepared:  
The worst is worldly loss thou canst unfold:  
Say, is my kingdom lost?"*

—SHAKESPEARE.

It was a feature peculiar to the colonial wars of North America, that the toils and dangers of the wilderness were to be encountered before the adverse hosts could meet. A wide and apparently an impervious boundary of forests severed the possessions of the hostile provinces of France and England. The hardy colonist, and the trained European who fought at his side, frequently expended months in struggling against the rapids of the streams, or in effecting the rugged passes of the mountains, in quest of an opportunity to exhibit their courage in a more martial conflict. But, emulating the patience and self-denial of the practised native warriors, they learned to overcome every difficulty; and it would seem that, in time, there was no recess of the woods so dark, nor any secret place so lovely, that it might claim exemption from the inroads of those who had pledged their blood to satiate their vengeance, or to uphold the cold and selfish policy of the distant monarchs of Europe.

Perhaps no district throughout the wide extent of the intermediate frontiers can furnish a livelier picture of the cruelty and fierceness of the savage warfare of those periods than the country which lies between the head waters of the Hudson and the adjacent lakes.

The facilities which nature had there offered to the march of the combatants were too obvious to be neglected. The lengthened sheet of the Champlain stretched from the frontiers of Canada, deep within the borders of the neighboring province of New York, forming a natural passage across half the distance that the French were compelled to master in order to strike their enemies. Near its southern termination, it received the contributions of another lake, whose waters were so limpid as to have been exclusively selected by the Jesuit missionaries to perform the typical purification of baptism, and to obtain for it the title of lake "du Saint Sacrement." The less zealous English thought they conferred a sufficient honor on its unsullied fountains, when they bestowed the name of their reigning prince, the second of the house of Hanover. The two united to rob the untutored possessors of its wooded scenery of their native right to perpetuate its original appellation of "Horican."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As each nation of the Indians had either its language or its dialect, they usually gave different names to the same places, though nearly all of their appellations were descriptive of the object. Thus, a literal translation of the name of this beautiful sheet of water, used by the tribe that dwelt on its banks would be "The Tail of the Lake." Lake George, as it is vulgarly, and now indeed legally called, forms a sort of tail to Lake Champlain, when viewed on the map. Hence the name.

Winding its way among countless islands, and imbedded in mountains, the "holy lake" extended a dozen leagues still farther to the south. With the high plain that there interposed itself to the further passage of the water, commenced a portage of as many miles, which conducted the adventurer to the banks of the Hudson, at a point where, with the usual obstructions of the rapids, or rifts, as they were then termed in the language of the country, the river became navigable to the tide.

While, in the pursuit of their daring plans of annoyance, the restless enterprise of the French even attempted the distant and difficult gorges of the Alleghany, it may easily be imagined that their proverbial acuteness would not overlook the natural advantages of the district we have just described. It became, emphatically, the bloody arena, in which most of the battles for the mastery of the colonies were contested. Forts were erected at the different points that commanded the facilities of the route, and were taken and retaken, razed and rebuilt, as victory alighted on the hostile banners. While the husbandman shrank back from the dangerous passes, within the safer boundaries of the more ancient settlements, armies larger than those that had often disposed of the sceptres of the mother countries, were seen to bury themselves in these forests, whence they rarely returned but in skeleton bands, that were haggard with care, or dejected by defeat. Though the arts of peace were unknown to this fatal region, its forests were alive with men; its shades and glens rang with the sounds of martial music, and the echoes of its mountains threw back the laugh, or repeated the wanton cry, of many a gallant and reckless youth, as he hurried by them, in the noontide of his spirits, to slumber in a long night of forgetfulness.

It was in this scene of strife and bloodshed that the incidents we shall attempt to relate occurred, during the third year



of the war which England and France last waged for the possession of a country that neither was destined to retain.

The imbecility of her military leaders abroad, and the fatal want of energy in her councils at home, had lowered the character of Great Britain from the proud elevation on which it had been placed, by the talents and enterprise of her former warriors and statesmen. No longer dreaded by her enemies, her servants were fast losing the confidence of self-respect. In this mortifying abasement, the colonists, though innocent of her imbecility, and too humble to be the agents of her blunders, were but the natural participators.

They had recently seen a chosen army from that country, which, reverencing as a mother, they had blindly believed invincible — an army led by a chief who had been selected from a crowd of trained warriors, for his rare military endowments, disgracefully routed by a handful of French and Indians, and only saved from annihilation by the coolness and spirit of a Virginian boy, whose ripper fame has since diffused itself, with the steady influence of moral truth, to the uttermost confines of Christendom.<sup>2</sup> A wide frontier had been laid naked by this unexpected disaster, and more substantial evils were preceded by a thousand fanciful and imaginary dangers. The alarmed colonists believed that the yells of the savages mingled with every fitful gust of wind that issued from the interminable forests of the west. The terrific character of their merciless enemies increased immeasurably the natural horrors of warfare. Numberless recent massacres were still vivid in their recollections; nor was there any ear in the provinces so deaf as not to have drunk in with avidity the narrative of some fearful tale of midnight murder, in which the natives of the forests were the principal and barbarous actors. As the credulous and excited traveller related the hazardous chances of the wilderness, the blood of the timid curdled with terror, and mothers cast anxious glances even at those children which slumbered within the security of the largest towns. In short, the magnifying influence of fear began to set at naught the calculations of reason, and to render those who should have remembered their manhood, the slaves of the basest of passions. Even the most confident and the stoutest hearts began to think the issue of the contest was becoming doubtful; and that abject class was hourly increasing in numbers, who thought they foresaw all the possessions of the English crown in America subdued by their Christian foes, or laid waste by the inroads of their relentless allies.

<sup>2</sup> Washington: who, after uselessly admonishing the European general of the danger into which he was heedlessly running, saved the remnants of the British army, on this occasion, by his decision and courage. The reputation earned by Washington in this battle was the principal cause of his being selected to command the American armies at a later day. It is a circumstance worthy of observation, that, while all America rang with his well-merited reputation, his name does not occur in any European account of the battle; at least, the author has searched for it without success. In this manner does the mother country absorb even the fame, under that system of rule.

When, therefore, intelligence was received at the fort, which covered the southern termination of the portage between the Hudson and the lakes, that Montcalm had been seen moving up the Champlain, with an army “numerous as the leaves on the trees,” its truth was admitted with more of the craven reluctance of fear than with the stern joy that a warrior should feel, in finding an enemy within reach of his blow. The news had been brought, towards the decline of a day in midsummer, by an Indian runner, who also bore an urgent request from Munro, the commander of a work on the shore of the “holy lake,” for a speedy and powerful reinforcement. It has already been mentioned that the distance between these two posts was less than five leagues. The rude path, which originally formed their line of communication, had been widened for the passage of wagons; so that the distance which had been travelled by the son of the forest in two hours, might easily be effected by a detachment of troops, with their necessary baggage, between the rising and setting of a summer sun. The loyal servants of the British crown had given to one of these forest fastnesses the name of William Henry, and to the other that of Fort Edward; calling each after a favorite prince of the reigning family. The veteran Scotchman just named held the first, with a regiment of regulars and a few provincials; a force really by far too small to make head against the formidable power that Montcalm was leading to the foot of his earthen mounds. At the latter, however, lay General Webb, who commanded the armies of the king in the northern provinces, with a body of more than five thousand men. By uniting the several detachments of his command, this officer might have arrayed nearly double that number of combatants against the enterprising Frenchman, who had ventured so far from his reinforcements, with an army but little superior in numbers.

But under the influence of their degraded fortunes, both officers and men appeared better disposed to await the approach of their formidable antagonists, within their works, than to resist the progress of their march, by emulating the successful example of the French at Fort du Quesne, and striking a blow on their advance.

After the first surprise of the intelligence had a little abated, a rumor was spread through the entrenched camp, which stretched along the margin of the Hudson, forming a chain of outworks to the body of the fort itself, that a chosen detachment of fifteen hundred men was to depart, with the dawn, for William Henry, the post at the northern extremity of

the portage. That which at first was only rumor, soon became certainty, as orders passed from the quarters of the commander-in-chief to the several corps he had selected for this service, to prepare for their speedy departure. All doubt as to the intention of Webb now vanished, and an hour or two of hurried footsteps and anxious faces succeeded. The novice in the military art flew from point to point, retarding his own preparations by the excess of his violent and somewhat distempered zeal; while the more practised veteran made his arrangements with a deliberation that scorned every appearance of haste; though his sober lineaments and anxious eye sufficiently betrayed that he had no very strong professional relish for the as yet untried and dreaded warfare of the wilderness. At length the sun set in a flood of glory, behind the distant western hills, and as darkness drew its veil around the secluded spot the sounds of preparation diminished; the last light finally disappeared from the log cabin of some officer; the trees cast their deeper shadows over the mounds and the rippling stream, and a silence soon pervaded the camp, as deep as that which reigned in the vast forest by which it was environed.

According to the orders of the preceding night, the heavy sleep of the army was broken by the rolling of the warning drums, whose rattling echoes were heard issuing, on the damp morning air, out of every vista of the woods, just as day began to draw the shaggy outlines of some tall pines of the vicinity, on the opening brightness of a soft and cloudless eastern sky. In an instant the whole camp was in motion; the meanest soldier arousing from his lair to witness the departure of his comrades, and to share in the excitement and incidents of the hour. The simple array of the chosen band was soon completed. While the regular and trained hirelings of the king marched with haughtiness to the right of the line, the less pretending colonists took their humbler position on its left, with a docility that long practice had rendered easy. The scouts departed; strong guards preceded and followed the lumbering vehicles that bore the baggage; and before the gray light of the morning was mellowed by the rays of the sun, the main body of the combatants wheeled into column, and left the encampment with a show of high military bearing, that served to drown the slumbering apprehensions of many a novice, who was now about to make his first essay in arms. While in view of their admiring comrades, the same proud front and ordered array was observed, until the notes of their fifes growing fainter in distance, the forest at length appeared to swallow up the living mass which had slowly entered its bosom.

The deepest sounds of the retiring and invisible column had ceased to be borne on the breeze to the listeners, and the latest straggler had already disappeared in pursuit; but there still remained the signs of another departure, before a log cabin of unusual size and accommodations, in front of which those sentinels paced their rounds, who were known to guard the person of the English general. At this spot were gathered some half dozen horses, caparisoned in a manner which showed that two, at least, were destined to bear the persons of females, of a rank that it was not usual to meet so far in the wilds of the country. A third wore the trappings and arms of an officer of the staff; while the rest, from the plainness of the housings, and the travelling mails with which they were encumbered, were evidently fitted for the reception of as many menials, who were, seemingly, already awaiting the pleasure of those they served. At a respectful distance from this unusual show were gathered divers groups of curious idlers; some admiring the blood and bone of the high-mettled military charger, and others gazing at the preparations, with dull wonder of vulgar curiosity. There was one man, however, who, by his countenance and actions, formed a marked exception to those who composed the latter class of spectators, being neither idle, nor seemingly very ignorant.

The person of this individual was to the last degree ungainly, without being in any particular manner deformed. He had all the bones and joints of other men, without any of their proportions. Erect, his stature surpassed that of his fellows; seated, he appeared reduced within the ordinary limits of the race. The same contrariety in his members seemed to exist throughout the whole man. His head was large; his shoulders narrow; his arms long and dangling; while his hands were small, if not delicate. His legs and thighs were thin, nearly to emaciation, but of extraordinary length; and his knees would have been considered tremendous, had they not been outdone by the broader foundations on which this false superstructure of the blended human orders was so profanely reared. The ill-assorted and injudicious attire of the individual only served to render his awkwardness more conspicuous. A sky-blue coat, with short and broad skirts and low cape, exposed a long thin neck, and longer and thinner legs, to the worst animadversions of the evil disposed. His nether garment was of yellow nankeen, closely fitted to the shape, and tied at his bunches of knees by large knots of white ribbon, a good deal sullied by use. Clouded cotton stockings, and shoes, on one of the latter of which was a plated spur, completed the costume of the lower extremity of this figure, no curve or angle of which was concealed, but, on the other hand, studiously exhibited, through the vanity or simplicity of its owner. From beneath the flap of an enormous pocket of a soiled

vest of embossed silk, heavily ornamented with tarnished silver lace, projected an instrument, which, from being seen in such martial company, might have been easily mistaken for some mischievous and unknown implement of war. Small as it was, this uncommon engine had excited the curiosity of most of the Europeans in the camp, though several of the provincials were seen to handle it, not only without fear, but with the utmost familiarity. A large, civil cocked hat, like those worn by clergymen within the last thirty years, surmounted the whole, furnishing dignity to a good-natured and somewhat vacant countenance, that apparently needed such artificial aid, to support the gravity of some high and extraordinary trust.

While the common herd stood aloof, in deference to the quarters of Webb, the figure we have described stalked in the centre of the domestics, freely expressing his censures or commendations on the merits of the horses, as by chance they displeased or satisfied his judgment.

"This beast, I rather conclude, friend, is not of home raising, but is from foreign lands, or perhaps from the little island itself over the blue water?" he said, in a voice as remarkable for the softness and sweetness of its tones, as was his person for its rare proportions: "I may speak of these things, and be no braggart; for I have been down at both havens; that which is situate at the mouth of Thames, and is named after the capital of Old England, and that which is called 'Haven,' with the addition of the word 'New'; and have seen the snows and brigantines collecting their droves, like the gathering to the ark, being outward bound to the Island of Jamaica, for the purpose of barter and traffic in four-footed animals; but never before have I beheld a beast which verified the true Scripture war-horse like this: 'He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.' It would seem that the stock of the horse of Israel has descended to our own time; would it not, friend?"

Receiving no reply to this extraordinary appeal, which in truth, as it was delivered with the vigor of full and sonorous tones, merited some sort of notice, he who had thus sung forth the language of the Holy Book turned to the silent figure to whom he had unwittingly addressed himself, and found a new and more powerful subject of admiration in the object that encountered his gaze. His eyes fell on the still, upright, and rigid form of the "Indian runner," who had borne to the camp the unwelcome tidings of the preceding evening. Although in a state of perfect repose, and apparently disregarding, with characteristic stoicism, the excitement and bustle around him, there was a sullen fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage, that was likely to arrest the attention of much more experienced eyes than those which now scanned him, in unconcealed amazement. The native bore both the tomahawk and knife of his tribe; and yet his appearance was not altogether that of a warrior. On the contrary, there was an air of neglect about his person, like that which might have proceeded from great and recent exertion, which he had not yet found leisure to repair. The colors of the war-paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect which had been thus produced by chance. His eye, alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. For a single instant, his searching and yet wary glance met the wondering look of the other, and then changing its direction, partly in cunning, and partly in disdain, it remained fixed, as if penetrating the distant air.

It is impossible to say what unlooked-for remark this short and silent communication, between two such singular men, might have elicited from the white man, had not his active curiosity been again drawn to other objects. A general movement among the domestics, and a low sound of gentle voices, announced the approach of those whose presence alone was wanted to enable the cavalcade to move. The simple admirer of the war-horse instantly fell back to a low, gaunt, switch-tailed mare, that was unconsciously gleaning the faded herbage of the camp nigh by; where, leaning with one elbow on the blanket that concealed an apology for a saddle, he became a spectator of the departure, while a foal was quietly making its morning repast, on the opposite side of the same animal.

A young man, in the dress of an officer, conducted to their steeds two females, who, as it was apparent by their dresses, were prepared to encounter the fatigues of a journey in the woods. One, and she was the most juvenile in her appearance, though both were young, permitted glimpses of her dazzling complexion, fair golden hair, and bright blue eyes, to be caught, as she artlessly suffered the morning air to blow aside the green veil which descended low from her beaver. The flush which still lingered above the pines in the western sky was not more bright nor delicate than the bloom on her cheek; nor was the opening day more cheering than the animated smile which she bestowed on the youth, as he assisted her into the saddle. The other, who appeared to share equally in the attentions of the young officer, concealed her charms from the gaze of the soldiery, with a care that seemed better fitted to the experience of four or five additional years.

It could be seen, however, that her person, though moulded with the same exquisite proportions, of which none of the graces were lost by the travelling dress she wore, was rather fuller and more mature than that of her companion.

No sooner were these females seated, than their attendant sprang lightly into the saddle of the war-horse, when the whole three bowed to Webb, who, in courtesy, awaited their parting on the threshold of his cabin, and turning their horses' heads, they proceeded at a slow amble, followed by their train, towards the northern entrance of the encampment. As they traversed that short distance, not a voice was heard amongst them; but a slight exclamation proceeded from the younger of the females, as the Indian runner glided by her, unexpectedly, and led the way along the military road in her front. Though this sudden and startling movement of the Indian produced no sound from the other, in the surprise her veil also was allowed to open its folds, and betrayed an indescribable look of pity, admiration, and horror, as her dark eye followed the easy motions of the savage. The tresses of this lady were shining and black, like the plumage of the raven. Her complexion was not brown, but it rather appeared charged with the color of the rich blood, that seemed ready to burst its bounds. And yet there was neither coarseness nor want of shadowing in a countenance that was exquisitely regular and dignified, and surpassingly beautiful. She smiled, as if in pity at her own momentary forgetfulness, discovering by the act a row of teeth that would have shamed the purest ivory; when, replacing the veil, she bowed her face, and rode in silence, like one whose thoughts were abstracted from the scene around her.



## CHAPTER 2.

*"Sola, sola, wo, ha, ho, sola!"*

—SHAKESPEARE.

While one of the lovely beings we have so cursorily presented to the reader was thus lost in thought, the other quickly recovered from the alarm which induced the exclamation, and, laughing at her own weakness, she inquired of the youth who rode by her side —

"Are such spectres frequent in the woods, Heyward; or is this sight an especial entertainment on our behalf? If the latter, gratitude must close our mouths; but if the former, both Cora and I shall have need to draw largely on that stock of hereditary courage which we boast, even before we are made to encounter the redoubtable Montcalm."

"Yon Indian is a 'runner' of the army; and, after the fashion of his people, he may be accounted a hero," returned the officer. "He has volunteered to guide us to the lake, by a path but little known, sooner than if we followed the tardy movements of the column: and, by consequence, more agreeably."

"I like him not," said the lady, shuddering, partly in assumed, yet more in real terror. "You know him, Duncan, or you would not trust yourself so freely to his keeping?"

"Say, rather, Alice, that I would not trust you. I do know him, or he would not have my confidence, and least of all at this moment. He is said to be a Canadian, too; and yet he served with our friends the Mohawks, who, as you know, are one of the six allied nations.<sup>3</sup> He was brought among us, as I have heard, by some strange accident in which your father was interested, and in which the savage was rigidly dealt by — but I forget the idle tale; it is enough, that he is now our friend."

<sup>3</sup> There existed for a long time a confederation among the Indian tribes which occupied the northwestern part of the colony of New York, which was at first known as the "Five Nations." At a later day it admitted another tribe, when the appellation was changed to that of the "Six Nations." The original confederation consisted of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Senecas, the Cayugas, and the Onondagas. The sixth tribe was the Tuscaroras. There are remnants of all these people still living on lands secured to them by the State; but they are daily disappearing, either by deaths or by removals to scenes more congenial to their habits. In a short time there will be no remains of these extraordinary people, in those regions in which they dwelt for centuries, but their names. The State of New York has counties named after all of them but the Mohawks and the Tuscaroras. The second river of that State is called the Mohawk.

"If he has been my father's enemy, I like him still less!" exclaimed the now really anxious girl. "Will you not speak to him, Major Heyward, that I may hear his tones? Foolish though it may be, you have often heard me avow my faith in the tones of the human voice!"

"It would be in vain; and answered, most probably, by an ejaculation. Though he may understand it, he affects, like most of his people, to be ignorant of the English; and least of all will he condescend to speak it, now that war demands the utmost exercise of his dignity. But he stops; the private path by which we are to journey is, doubtless, at hand."

The conjecture of Major Heyward was true. When they reached the spot where the Indian stood, pointing into the thicket that fringed the military road, a narrow and blind path, which might, with some little inconvenience, receive one person at a time, became visible.

"Here, then, lies our way," said the young man, in a low voice. "Manifest no distrust, or you may invite the danger you appear to apprehend."

"Cora, what think you?" asked the reluctant fair one. "If we journey with the troops, though we may find their presence irksome, shall we not feel better assurance of our safety?"

"Being little accustomed to the practices of the savages, Alice, you mistake the place of real danger," said Heyward. "If enemies have reached the portage at all, a thing by no means probable, as our scouts are abroad, they will surely be found skirting the column where scalps abound the most. The route of the detachment is known, while ours, having been determined within the hour, must still be secret."

"Should we distrust the man because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?" coldly asked Cora.

Alice hesitated no longer; but giving her Narragansett<sup>4</sup> a smart cut of the whip, she was the first to dash aside the slight branches of the bushes, and to follow the runner along the dark and tangled pathway. The young man regarded the last speaker in open admiration, and even permitted her fairer though certainly not more beautiful companion to proceed unattended, while he sedulously opened the way himself for the passage of her who has been called Cora. It would seem

that the domestics had been previously instructed; for, instead of penetrating the thicket, they followed the route of the column; a measure which Heyward stated had been dictated by the sagacity of their guide, in order to diminish the marks of their trail, if, haply, the Canadian savages should be lurking so far in advance of their army. For many minutes the intricacy of the route admitted of no further dialogue; after which they emerged from the broad border of underbrush which grew along the line of the highway, and entered under the high but dark arches of the forest. Here their progress was less interrupted, and the instant the guide perceived that the females could command their steeds, he moved on, at a pace between a trot and a walk, and at a rate which kept the sure-footed and peculiar animals they rode, at a fast yet easy amble. The youth had turned to speak to the dark-eyed Cora, when the distant sound of horses' hoofs, clattering over the roots of the broken way in his rear, caused him to check his charger; and, as his companions drew their reins at the same instant, the whole party came to a halt, in order to obtain an explanation of the unlooked-for interruption.

<sup>4</sup> In the State of Rhode Island there is a bay called Narragansett, so named after a powerful tribe of Indians, which formerly dwelt on its banks. Accident, or one of those unaccountable freaks which nature sometimes plays in the animal world, gave rise to a breed of horses which were once well known in America by the name of the Narragansetts. They were small, commonly of the color called sorrel in America, and distinguished by their habit of pacing. Horses of this race were, and are still, in much request as saddle-horses, on account of their hardiness and the ease of their movements. As they were also sure of foot, the Narragansetts were greatly sought for by females who were obliged to travel over the roots and holes in the "new countries."

In a few moments a colt was seen gliding, like a fallow-deer, among the straight trunks of the pines; and, in another instant, the person of the ungainly man described in the preceding chapter, came into view, with as much rapidity as he could excite his meagre beast to endure without coming to an open rupture. Until now this personage had escaped the observation of the travellers. If he possessed the power to arrest any wandering eye when exhibiting the glories of his altitude on foot, his equestrian graces were still more likely to attract attention. Notwithstanding a constant application of his one armed heel to the flanks of the mare, the most confirmed gait that he could establish was a Canterbury gallop with the hind legs, in which those more forward assisted for doubtful moments, though generally content to maintain a loping trot. Perhaps the rapidity of the changes from one of these paces to the other created an optical illusion, which might thus magnify the powers of the beast; for it is certain that Heyward, who possessed a true eye for the merits of a horse, was unable, with his utmost ingenuity, to decide by what sort of movement his pursuer worked his sinuous way on his footsteps with such persevering hardihood.

The industry and movements of the rider were not less remarkable than those of the ridden. At each change in the evolutions of the latter, the former raised his tall person in the stirrups; producing, in this manner, by the undue elongation of his legs, such sudden growths and diminishings of the stature, as baffled every conjecture that might be made as to his dimensions. If to this be added the fact that, in consequence of the ex parte application of the spur, one side of the mare appeared to journey faster than the other; and that the aggrieved flank was resolutely indicated by unremitted flourishes of a bushy tail, we finish the picture of both horse and man.

The frown which had gathered around the handsome, open, and manly brow of Heyward, gradually relaxed, and his lips curled into a slight smile, as he regarded the stranger. Alice made no very powerful effort to control her merriment; and even the dark, thoughtful eye of Cora lighted with a humor that, it would seem, the habit, rather than the nature of its mistress repressed.

"Seek you any here?" demanded Heyward, when the other had arrived sufficiently nigh to abate his speed; "I trust you are no messenger of evil tidings?"

"Even so," replied the stranger, making diligent use of his triangular castor, to produce a circulation in the close air of the woods, and leaving his hearers in doubt to which of the young man's questions he responded; when, however, he had cooled his face, and recovered his breath, he continued, "I hear you are riding to William Henry; as I am journeying thitherward myself, I concluded good company would seem consistent to the wishes of both parties."

"You appear to possess the privilege of a casting vote," returned Heyward; "we are three, whilst you have consulted no one but yourself."

"Even so. The first point to be obtained is to know one's own mind. Once sure of that, and where women are concerned, it is not easy, the next is, to act up to the decision. I have endeavored to do both, and here I am."

"If you journey to the lake, you have mistaken your route," said Heyward, haughtily; "the highway thither is at least half a mile behind you."

"Even so," returned the stranger, nothing daunted by this cold reception; "I have tarried at 'Edward' a week, and I

should be dumb not to have inquired the road I was to journey; and if dumb there would be an end to my calling." After simpering in a small way, like one whose modesty prohibited a more open expression of his admiration of a witticism that was perfectly unintelligible to his hearers, he continued: "It is not prudent for any one of my profession to be too familiar with those he is to instruct; for which reason I follow not the line of the army; besides which, I conclude that a gentleman of your character has the best judgment in matters of wayfaring; I have therefore decided to join company, in order that the ride may be made agreeable, and partake of social communion."

"A most arbitrary, if not a hasty decision!" exclaimed Heyward, undecided whether to give vent to his growing anger, or to laugh in the other's face. "But you speak of instruction, and of a profession; are you an adjunct to the provincial corps, as a master of the noble science of defence and offence; or, perhaps, you are one who draws lines and angles, under the pretence of expounding the mathematics?"

The stranger regarded his interrogator a moment, in wonder; and then, losing every mark of self-satisfaction in an expression of solemn humility, he answered:—

"Of offence, I hope there is none, to either party: of defence, I make none — by God's good mercy, having committed no palpable sin since last entreating his pardoning grace. I understand not your allusions about lines and angles; and I leave expounding to those who have been called and set apart for that holy office. I lay claim to no higher gift than a small insight into the glorious art of petitioning and thanksgiving, as practised in psalmody."

"The man is, most manifestly, a disciple of Apollo," cried the amused Alice, "and I take him under my own especial protection. Nay, throw aside that frown, Heyward, and in pity to my longing ears, suffer him to journey in our train. Besides," she added, in a low and hurried voice, casting a glance at the distant Cora, who slowly followed the footsteps of their silent but sullen guide, "it may be a friend added to our strength, in time of need."

"Think you, Alice, that I would trust those I love by this secret path, did I imagine such need could happen?"

"Nay, nay, I think not of it now; but this strange man amuses me; and if he 'hath music in his soul,' let us not churlishly reject his company." She pointed persuasively along the path with her riding-whip, while their eyes met in a look which the young man lingered a moment to prolong; then yielding to her gentle influence, he clapped his spurs into his charger, and in a few bounds was again at the side of Cora.

"I am glad to encounter thee, friend," continued the maiden, waving her hand to the stranger to proceed, as she urged her Narragansett to renew its amble. "Partial relatives have almost persuaded me that I am not entirely worthless in a duet myself; and we may enliven our wayfaring by indulging in our favorite pursuit. It might be of signal advantage to one, ignorant as I, to hear the opinions and experience of a master in the art."

"It is refreshing both to the spirits and to the body to indulge in psalmody, in befitting seasons," returned the master of song, unhesitatingly complying with her intimation to follow; "and nothing would relieve the mind more than such a consoling communion. But four parts are altogether necessary to the perfection of melody. You have all the manifestations of a soft and rich treble; I can, by especial aid, carry a full tenor to the highest letter; but we lack counter and bass! You officer of the king, who hesitated to admit me to his company, might fill the latter, if one may judge from the intonations of his voice in common dialogue."

"Judge not too rashly from hasty and deceptive appearances," said the lady, smiling; "though Major Heyward can assume such deep notes on occasion, believe me, his natural tones are better fitted for a mellow tenor than the bass you heard."

"Is he, then, much practised in the art of psalmody?" demanded her simple companion.

Alice felt disposed to laugh, though she succeeded in suppressing her merriment, ere she answered —

"I apprehend that he is rather addicted to profane song. The chances of a soldier's life are but little fitted for the encouragement of more sober inclinations."

"Man's voice is given to him, like his other talents, to be used, and not to be abused. None can say they have ever known me neglect my gifts! I am thankful that, though my boyhood may be said to have been set apart, like the youth of the royal David, for the purposes of music, no syllable of rude verse has ever profaned my lips."

"You have, then, limited your efforts to sacred song?"

"Even so. As the psalms of David exceed all other language, so does the psalmody that has been fitted to them by the divines and sages of the land, surpass all vain poetry. Happily, I may say that I utter nothing but the thoughts and the

wishes of the King of Israel himself; for though the times may call for some slight changes, yet does this version which we use in the colonies of New England, so much exceed all other versions, that, by its richness, its exactness, and its spiritual simplicity, it approacheth, as near as may be, to the great work of the inspired writer. I never abide in any place, sleeping or waking, without an example of this gifted work. 'Tis the six-and-twentieth edition, promulgated at Boston, Anno Domini 1744; and is entitled, *The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testaments; faithfully translated into English Metre, for the Use, Edification, and Comfort of the Saints, in Public and Private, especially in New England.*"

During this eulogium on the rare production of his native poets, the stranger had drawn the book from his pocket, and, fitting a pair of iron-rimmed spectacles to his nose, opened the volume with a care and veneration suited to its sacred purposes. Then, without circumlocution or apology, first pronouncing the word "Standish," and placing the unknown engine, already described, to his mouth, from which he drew a high, shrill sound, that was followed by an octave below, from his own voice, he commenced singing the following words, in full, sweet, and melodious tones, that set the music, the poetry, and even the uneasy motion of his ill-trained beast at defiance:—

"How good it is, O see,  
And how it pleaseth well,  
Together, e'en in unity,  
For brethren so to dwell.  
It's like the choice ointment,  
From the head to the beard did go:  
Down Aaron's beard, that downward went,  
His garment's skirts unto."

The delivery of these skilful rhymes was accompanied, on the part of the stranger, by a regular rise and fall of his right hand, which terminated at the descent, by suffering the fingers to dwell a moment on the leaves of the little volume; and on the ascent, by such a flourish of the member as none but the initiated may ever hope to imitate. It would seem that long practice had rendered this manual accompaniment necessary; for it did not cease until the preposition which the poet had selected for the close of his verse, had been duly delivered like a word of two syllables.

Such an innovation on the silence and retirement of the forest could not fail to enlist the ears of those who journeyed at so short a distance in advance. The Indian muttered a few words in broken English to Heyward, who, in his turn, spoke to the stranger; at once interrupting, and, for the time, closing his musical efforts.

"Though we are not in danger, common prudence would teach us to journey through this wilderness in as quiet a manner as possible. You will, then, pardon me, Alice, should I diminish your enjoyments, by requesting this gentleman to postpone his chant until a safer opportunity."

"You will diminish them, indeed," returned the arch girl, "for never did I hear a more unworthy conjunction of execution and language, than that to which I have been listening; and I was far gone in a learned inquiry into the causes of such an unfitness between sound and sense, when you broke the charm of my musings by that bass of yours, Duncan!"

"I know not what you call my bass," said Heyward, piqued at her remark, "but I know that your safety, and that of Cora, is far dearer to me than could be any orchestra of Handel's music." He paused and turned his head quickly towards a thicket, and then bent his eyes suspiciously on their guide, who continued his steady pace, in undisturbed gravity. The young man smiled to himself, for he believed he had mistaken some shining berry of the woods for the glistening eyeballs of a prowling savage, and he rode forward, continuing the conversation which had been interrupted by the passing thought.

Major Heyward was mistaken only in suffering his youthful and generous pride to suppress his active watchfulness. The cavalcade had not long passed, before the branches of the bushes that formed the thicket were cautiously moved asunder, and a human visage, as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it, peered out on the retiring footsteps of the travellers. A gleam of exultation shot across the darkly painted lineaments of the inhabitant of the forest, as he traced the route of his intended victims, who rode unconsciously onward; the light and graceful forms of the females waving among the trees, in the curvatures of their path, followed at each bend by the manly figure of Heyward, until, finally, the shapeless person of the singing-master was concealed behind the numberless trunks of trees, that rose, in dark lines, in the intermediate space.



## CHAPTER 3.

*"Before these fields were shorn and tilled,  
Full to the brim our rivers flowed;  
The melody of waters filled  
The fresh and boundless wood;  
And torrents dashed, and rivulets played,  
And fountains spouted in the shade."*

—BRYANT.

Leaving the unsuspecting Heyward and his confiding companions to penetrate still deeper into a forest that contained such treacherous inmates, we must use an author's privilege, and shift the scene a few miles to the westward of the place where we have last seen them.

On that day, two men were lingering on the banks of a small but rapid stream, within an hour's journey of the encampment of Webb, like those who awaited the appearance of an absent person, or the approach of some expected event. The vast canopy of woods spread itself to the margin of the river overhanging the water, and shadowing its dark current with a deeper hue. The rays of the sun were beginning to grow less fierce, and the intense heat of the day was lessened, as the cooler vapors of the springs and fountains rose above their leafy beds, and rested in the atmosphere. Still that breathing silence, which marks the drowsy sultriness of an American landscape in July, pervaded the secluded spot, interrupted only by the low voices of the men, the occasional and lazy tap of a woodpecker, the discordant cry of some gaudy jay, or a swelling on the ear, from the dull roar of a distant waterfall.

These feeble and broken sounds were, however, too familiar to the foresters, to draw their attention from the more interesting matter of their dialogue. While one of these loiterers showed the red skin and wild accoutrements of a native of the woods, the other exhibited, through the mask of his rude and nearly savage equipments, the brighter, though sunburnt and long-faded complexion of one who might claim descent from a European parentage. The former was seated on the end of a mossy log, in a posture that permitted him to heighten the effect of his earnest language, by the calm but expressive gestures of an Indian engaged in debate. His body, which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colors of white and black. His closely shaved head, on which no other hair than the well known and chivalrous scalping tuft<sup>5</sup> was preserved, was without ornament of any kind, with the exception of a solitary eagle's plume, that crossed his crown, and depended over the left shoulder. A tomahawk and scalping-knife, of English manufacture, were in his girdle; while a short military rifle, of that sort with which the policy of the whites armed their savage allies, lay carelessly across his bare and sinewy knee. The expanded chest, full formed limbs, and grave countenance of this warrior, would denote that he had reached the vigor of his days, though no symptoms of decay appeared to have yet weakened his manhood.

<sup>5</sup> The North American warrior caused the hair to be plucked from his whole body; a small tuft, only, was left on the crown of his head in order that his enemy might avail himself of it, in wrenching off the scalp in the event of his fall. The scalp was the only admissible trophy of victory. Thus, it was deemed more important to obtain the scalp than to kill the man. Some tribes lay great stress on the honor of striking a dead body. These practices have nearly disappeared among the Indians of the Atlantic States.

The frame of the white man, judging by such parts as were not concealed by his clothes, was like that of one who had known hardships and exertion from his earliest youth. His person, though muscular, was rather attenuated than full; but every nerve and muscle appeared strung and indurated by unremitted exposure and toil. He wore a hunting-shirt of forest green, fringed with faded yellow<sup>6</sup>, and a summer cap of skins which had been shorn of their fur. He also bore a knife in a girdle of wampum, like that which confined the scanty garments of the Indian, but no tomahawk. His moccasins were ornamented after the gay fashion of the natives, while the only part of his under-dress which appeared below the hunting-frock, was a pair of buckskin leggings, that laced at the sides, and which were gartered above the knees with the sinews of a deer. A pouch and horn completed his personal accoutrements, though a rifle of great length<sup>7</sup>, which the theory of the more ingenious whites had taught them was the most dangerous of all fire-arms, leaned against a neighboring sapling. The eye of the hunter, or scout, whichever he might be, was small, quick, keen, and restless, roving while he spoke, on every side of him, as if in quest of game, or distrusting the sudden approach of some lurking enemy. Notwithstanding the symptoms of habitual suspicion, his countenance was not only without guile, but at the moment at which he is introduced, it was charged with an expression of sturdy honesty.

<sup>6</sup> The hunting-shirt is a picturesque smock frock, being shorter, and ornamented with fringes and tassels. The colors are intended to imitate the hues of the wood with a view to concealment. Many corps of American riflemen have been thus attired; and the dress is one of the most striking of modern times. The hunting-shirt is frequently white.

<sup>7</sup> The rifle of the army is short; that of the hunter is always long.

“Even your traditions make the case in my favor, Chingachgook,” he said, speaking in the tongue which was known to all the natives who formerly inhabited the country between the Hudson and the Potomac, and of which we shall give a free translation for the benefit of the reader; endeavoring, at the same time, to preserve some of the peculiarities, both of the individual and of the language. “Your fathers came from the setting sun, crossed the big river,<sup>8</sup> fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came from the red sky of the morning, over the salt lake, and did their work much after the fashion that had been set them by yours; then let God judge the matter between us, and friends spare their words!”

<sup>8</sup> The Mississippi. The scout alludes to a tradition which is very popular among the tribes of the Atlantic States. Evidence of their Asiatic origin is deduced from the circumstances, though great uncertainty hangs over the whole history of the Indians.

“My fathers fought with the naked redmen!” returned the Indian sternly, in the same language. “Is there no difference, Hawkeye, between the stone-headed arrow of the warrior, and the leaden bullet with which you kill?”

“There is reason in an Indian, though nature has made him with a red skin!” said the white man, shaking his head like one on whom such an appeal to his justice was not thrown away. For a moment he appeared to be conscious of having the worst of the argument, then, rallying again, he answered the objection of his antagonist in the best manner his limited information would allow: “I am no scholar, and I care not who knows it; but judging from what I have seen, at deer chases and squirrel hunts, of the sparks below, I should think a rifle in the hands of their grandfathers was not so dangerous as a hickory bow and a good flint-head might be, if drawn with Indian judgment, and sent by an Indian eye.”

“You have the story told by your fathers,” returned the other, coldly waving his hand. “What say your old men? do they tell the young warriors, that the pale-faces met the redmen, painted for war and armed with the stone hatchet and wooden gun?”

“I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren’t deny that I am genuine white,” the scout replied, surveying, with secret satisfaction, the faded color of his bony and sinewy hand; “and I am willing to own that my people have many ways, of which, as an honest man, I can’t approve. It is one of their customs to write in books what they have done and seen, instead of telling them in their villages, where the lie can be given to the face of a cowardly boaster, and the brave soldier can call on his comrades to witness for the truth of his words. In consequence of this bad fashion, a man who is too conscientious to mispend his days among the women, in learning the names of black marks, may never hear of the deeds of his fathers, nor feel a pride in striving to outdo them. For myself, I conclude the Bumppos could shoot, for I have a natural turn with a rifle, which must have been handed down from generation to generation, as, our holy commandments tell us, all good and evil gifts are bestowed; though I should be loth to answer for other people in such a matter. But every story has its two sides; so I ask you, Chingachgook, what passed, according to the traditions of the redmen, when our fathers first met?”

A silence of a minute succeeded, during which the Indian sat mute; then, full of the dignity of his office, he commenced his brief tale, with a solemnity that served to heighten its appearance of truth.

“Listen, Hawkeye, and your ear shall drink no lie. ’Tis what my fathers have said, and what the Mohicans have done.” He hesitated a single instant, and bending a cautious glance toward his companion, he continued, in a manner that was divided between interrogation and assertion, “Does not this stream at our feet run towards the summer, until its waters grow salt, and the current flows upward?”

“It can’t be denied that your traditions tell you true in both these matters,” said the white man; “for I have been there, and have seen them; though, why water, which is so sweet in the shade, should become bitter in the sun, is an alteration for which I have never been able to account.”

“And the current!” demanded the Indian, who expected his reply with that sort of interest that a man feels in the confirmation of testimony, at which he marvels even while he respects it; “the fathers of Chingachgook have not lied!”

“The Holy Bible is not more true, and that is the truest thing in nature. They call this up-stream current the tide, which is a thing soon explained, and clear enough. Six hours the waters run in, and six hours they run out, and the reason is this:

when there is higher water in the sea than in the river, they run in, until the river gets to be highest, and then it runs out again."

"The waters in the woods, and on the great lakes, run downward until they lie like my hand," said the Indian, stretching the limb horizontally before him, "and then they run no more."

"No honest man will deny it," said the scout, a little nettled at the implied distrust of his explanation of the mystery of the tides; "and I grant that it is true on the small scale, and where the land is level. But everything depends on what scale you look at things. Now, on the small scale, the 'arth is level; but on the large scale it is round. In this manner, pools and ponds, and even the great fresh-water lake, may be stagnant, as you and I both know they are, having seen them; but when you come to spread water over a great tract, like the sea, where the earth is round, how in reason can the water be quiet? You might as well expect the river to lie still on the brink of those black rocks a mile above us, though your own ears tell you that it is tumbling over them at this very moment!"

If unsatisfied by the philosophy of his companion, the Indian was far too dignified to betray his unbelief. He listened like one who was convinced, and resumed his narrative in his former solemn manner.

"We came from the place where the sun is hid at night, over great plains where the buffaloes live, until we reached the big river. There we fought the Alligewi, till the ground was red with their blood. From the banks of the big river to the shores of the salt lake, there was none to meet us. The Maquas followed at a distance. We said the country should be ours from the place where the water runs up no longer on this stream, to a river twenty suns' journey toward the summer. The land we had taken like warriors, we kept like men. We drove the Maquas into the woods with the bears. They only tasted salt at the licks; they drew no fish from the great lake; we threw them the bones."

"All this I have heard and believe," said the white man, observing that the Indian paused: "but it was long before the English came into the country."

"A pine grew then where this chestnut now stands. The first pale-faces who came among us spoke no English. They came in a large canoe, when my fathers had buried the tomahawk with the redmen around them. Then, Hawkeye," he continued, betraying his deep emotion only by permitting his voice to fall to those low, guttural tones, which rendered his language, as spoken at times, so very musical; "then, Hawkeye, we were one people, and we were happy. The salt lake gave us its fish, the wood its deer, and the air its birds. We took wives who bore us children; we worshipped the Great Spirit; and we kept the Maquas beyond the sound of our songs of triumph!"

"Know you anything of your own family at that time?" demanded the white. "But you are a just man, for an Indian! and, as I suppose you hold their gifts, your fathers must have been brave warriors, and wise men at the council fire."

"My tribe is the grandfather of nations, but I am an unmixed man. The blood of chiefs is in my veins, where it must stay forever. The Dutch landed, and gave my people the fire-water; they drank until the heavens and the earth seemed to meet, and they foolishly thought they had found the Great Spirit. Then they parted with their land. Foot by foot, they were driven back from the shores, until I, that am a chief and a sagamore, have never seen the sun shine but through the trees, and have never visited the graves of, my fathers!"

"Graves bring solemn feelings over the mind," returned the scout, a good deal touched at the calm suffering of his companion; "and they often aid a man in his good intentions; though, for myself, I expect to leave my own bones unburied, to bleach in the woods, or to be torn asunder by the wolves. But where are to be found those of your race who came to their kin in the Delaware country, so many summers since?"

"Where are the blossoms of those summers! — fallen, one by one: so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits. I am on the hill-top, and must go down into the valley; and when Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the sagemores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans."

"Uncas is here!" said another voice, in the same soft, guttural tones, near his elbow; "who speaks to Uncas?"

The white man loosened his knife in his leathern sheath, and made an involuntary movement of the hand towards his rifle, at this sudden interruption; but the Indian sat composed, and without turning his head at the unexpected sounds.

At the next instant, a youthful warrior passed between them, with a noiseless step, and seated himself on the bank of the rapid stream. No exclamation of surprise escaped the father, nor was any question asked, or reply given, for several minutes; each appearing to await the moment when he might speak, without betraying womanish curiosity or childish impatience. The white man seemed to take counsel from their customs, and, relinquishing his grasp of the rifle, he also

remained silent and reserved. At length Chingachgook turned his eyes slowly towards his son, and demanded —

“Do the Maquas dare to leave the print of their moccasins in these woods?”

“I have been on their trail,” replied the young Indian, “and know that they number as many as the fingers of my two hands; but they lie hid, like cowards.”

“The thieves are outlying for scalps and plunder!” said the white man, whom we shall call Hawkeye, after the manner of his companions. “That bushy Frenchman, Montcalm, will send his spies into our very camp, but he will know what road we travel!”

“Tis enough!” returned the father, glancing his eye towards the setting sun; “they shall be driven like deer from their bushes. Hawkeye, let us eat to-night, and show the Maquas that we are men to-morrow.”

“I am as ready to do the one as the other; but to fight the Iroquois ’tis necessary to find the skulkers; and to eat, ’tis necessary to get the game — talk of the devil and he will come; there is a pair of the biggest antlers I have seen this season, moving the bushes below the hill! Now, Uncas,” he continued in a half whisper, and laughing with a kind of inward sound, like one who had learnt to be watchful, “I will bet my charger three times full of powder, against a foot of wampum, that I take him atwixt the eyes, and nearer to the right than to the left.”

“It cannot be!” said the young Indian, springing to his feet with youthful eagerness; “all but the tips of his horns are hid!”

“He’s a boy!” said the white man, shaking his head while he spoke, and addressing the father. “Does he think when a hunter sees a part of the creatur’, he can’t tell where the rest of him should be!”

Adjusting his rifle, he was about to make an exhibition of that skill, on which he so much valued himself, when the warrior struck up the piece with his hand, saying — “Hawkeye! will you fight the Maquas?”

“These Indians know the nature of the woods, as it might be by instinct!” returned the scout, dropping his rifle, and turning away like a man who was convinced of his error. “I must leave the buck to your arrow, Uncas, or we may kill a deer for them thieves, the Iroquois, to eat.”

The instant the father seconded this intimation by an expressive gesture of the hand, Uncas threw himself on the ground, and approached the animal with wary movements. When within a few yards of the cover, he fitted an arrow to his bow with the utmost care, while the antlers moved, as if their owner snuffed an enemy in the tainted air. In another moment the twang of the cord was heard, a white streak was seen glancing into the bushes, and the wounded buck plunged from the cover, to the very feet of his hidden enemy. Avoiding the horns of the infuriated animal, Uncas darted to his side, and passed his knife across the throat, when bounding to the edge of the river it fell, dyeing the waters with its blood. “’Twas done with Indian skill,” said the scout, laughing inwardly, but with vast satisfaction; “and ’twas a pretty sight to behold! Though an arrow is a near shot, and needs a knife to finish the work.”

“Hugh!” ejaculated his companion, turning quickly, like a hound who scented game.

“By the Lord, there is a drove of them!” exclaimed the scout, whose eyes began to glisten with the ardor of his usual occupation; “if they come within range of a bullet I will drop one, though the whole Six Nations should be lurking within sound! What do you hear, Chingachgook? for to my ears the woods are dumb.”

“There is but one deer, and he is dead,” said the Indian, bending his body till his ear nearly touched the earth. “I hear the sounds of feet!”

“Perhaps the wolves have driven the buck to shelter, and are following on his trail.”

“No. The horses of white men are coming!” returned the other, raising himself with dignity, and resuming his seat on the log with his former composure. “Hawkeye, they are your brothers; speak to them.”

“That will I, and in English that the king needn’t be ashamed to answer,” returned the hunter, speaking in the language of which he boasted; “but I see nothing, nor do I hear the sounds of man or beast; ’tis strange that an Indian should understand white sounds better than a man who, his very enemies will own, has no cross in his blood, although he may have lived with the redskins long enough to be suspected! Ha! there goes something like the cracking of a dry stick, too — now I hear the bushes move — yes, yes, there is a trampling that I mistook for the falls — and — but here they come themselves; God keep them from the Iroquois!”

## CHAPTER 4.

*"Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove  
Till I torment thee for this injury."*

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The words were still in the mouth of the scout, when the leader of the party, whose approaching footsteps had caught the vigilant ear of the Indian, came openly into view. A beaten path, such as those made by the periodical passage of the deer, wound through a little glen at no great distance, and struck the river at the point where the white man and his red companions had posted themselves. Along this track the travellers, who had produced a surprise so unusual in the depths of the forest, advanced slowly towards the hunter, who was in front of his associates, in readiness to receive them.

"Who comes?" demanded the scout, throwing his rifle carelessly across his left arm, and keeping the forefinger of his right hand on the trigger, though he avoided all appearance of menace in the act, "Who comes hither, among the beasts and dangers of the wilderness?"

"Believers in religion, and friends to the law and to the king," returned he who rode foremost. "Men who have journeyed since the rising sun, in the shades of this forest, without nourishment, and are sadly tired of their wayfaring."

"You are, then, lost," interrupted the hunter, "and have found how helpless 'tis not to know whether to take the right hand or the left?"

"Even so; sucking babes are not more dependent on those who guide them than we who are of larger growth, and who may now be said to possess the stature without the knowledge of men. Know you the distance to a post of the crown called William Henry?"

"Hoot!" shouted the scout, who did not spare his open laughter, though, instantly checking the dangerous sounds, he indulged his merriment at less risk of being overheard by any lurking enemies. "You are as much off the scent as a hound would be, with Horican atwixt him and the deer! William Henry, man! if you are friends to the king, and have business with the army, your better way would be to follow the river down to Edward, and lay the matter before Webb; who tarries there, instead of pushing into the defiles, and driving this saucy Frenchman back across Champlain, into his den again."

Before the stranger could make any reply to this unexpected proposition, another horseman dashed the bushes aside, and leaped his charger into the pathway, in front of his companion.

"What, then, may be our distance from Fort Edward?" demanded a new speaker; "the place you advise us to seek we left this morning, and our destination is the head of the lake."

"Then you must have lost your eyesight afore losing your way, for the road across the portage is cut to a good two rods, and is as grand a path, I calculate, as any that runs into London, or even before the palace of the king himself."

"We will not dispute concerning the excellence of the passage," returned Heyward, smiling; for, as the reader has anticipated, it was he. "It is enough, for the present, that we trusted to an Indian guide to take us by a nearer, though blinder path, and that we are deceived in his knowledge. In plain words, we know not where we are."

"An Indian lost in the woods!" said the scout, shaking his head doubtingly; "when the sun is scorching the tree-tops, and the water-courses are full; when the moss on every beech he sees, will tell him in which quarter the north star will shine at night! The woods are full of deer paths which run to the streams and licks, places well known to everybody; nor have the geese done their flight to the Canada waters altogether! 'Tis strange that an Indian should be lost atwixt Horican and the bend in the river. Is he a Mohawk?"

"Not by birth, though adopted in that tribe; I think his birthplace was farther north, and he is one of those you call a Huron."

"Hugh!" exclaimed the two companions of the scout, who had continued, until this part of the dialogue, seated immovable, and apparently indifferent to what passed, but who now sprang to their feet with an activity and interest that had evidently got the better of their reserve, by surprise.

"A Huron!" repeated the sturdy scout, once more shaking his head in open distrust; "they are a thievish race, nor do I care by whom they are adopted; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds. Since you trusted

yourself to the care of one of that nation, I only wonder that you have not fallen in with more."

"Of that there is little danger, since William Henry is so many miles in our front. You forget that I have told you our guide is now a Mohawk, and that he serves with our forces as a friend."

"And I tell you that he who is born a Mingo will die a Mingo," returned the other, positively. "A Mohawk! No, give me a Delaware or a Mohican for honesty; and when they will fight, which they won't all do, having suffered their cunning enemies, the Maquas, to make them women — but when they will fight at all, look to a Delaware, or a Mohican, for a warrior!"

"Enough of this," said Heyward, impatiently; "I wish not to inquire into the character of a man that I know, and to whom you must be a stranger. You have not yet answered my question: what is our distance from the main army at Edward?"

"It seems that may depend on who is your guide. One would think such a horse as that might get over a good deal of ground atwixt sun-up and sun-down."

"I wish no contention of idle words with you, friend," said Heyward, curbing his dissatisfied manner, and speaking in a more gentle voice; "if you will tell me the distance to Fort Edward, and conduct me thither, your labor shall not go without its reward."

"And in so doing, how know I that I don't guide an enemy, and a spy of Montcalm, to the works of the army? It is not every man who can speak the English tongue that is an honest subject."

"If you serve with the troops, of whom I judge you to be a scout, you should know of such a regiment of the king as the 60th."

"The 60th! you can tell me little of the Royal Americans that I don't know, though I do wear a hunting-shirt instead of a scarlet jacket."

"Well, then, among the other things, you may know the name of its major?"

"Its major!" interrupted the hunter, elevating his body like one who was proud of his trust. "If there is a man in the country who knows Major Effingham, he stands before you."

"It is a corps which has many majors; the gentleman you name is the senior, but I speak of the junior of them all; he who commands the companies in garrison at William Henry."

"Yes, yes, I have heard that a young gentleman of vast riches, from one of the provinces far south, has got the place. He is over young, too, to hold such rank, and to be put above men whose heads are beginning to bleach; and yet they say he is a soldier in his knowledge, and a gallant gentleman!"

"Whatever he may be, or however he may be qualified for his rank, he now speaks to you, and of course can be no enemy to dread."

The scout regarded Heyward in surprise, and then lifting his cap, he answered, in a tone less confident than before, though still expressing doubt —

"I have heard a party was to leave the encampment this morning, for the lake shore."

"You have heard the truth; but I preferred a nearer route, trusting to the knowledge of the Indian I mentioned."

"And he deceived you, and then deserted?"

"Neither, as I believe; certainly not the latter, for he is to be found in the rear."

"I should like to look at the creatur'; if it is a true Iroquois I can tell him by his knavish look, and by his paint," said the scout, stepping past the charger of Heyward, and entering the path behind the mare of the singing-master, whose foal had taken advantage of the halt to exact the maternal contribution. After shoving aside the bushes, and proceeding a few paces, he encountered the females, who awaited the result of the conference with anxiety, and not entirely without apprehension. Behind these, the runner leaned against a tree, where he stood the close examination of the scout with an air unmoved, though with a look so dark and savage, that it might in itself excite fear. Satisfied with his scrutiny, the hunter soon left him. As he repassed the females, he paused a moment to gaze upon their beauty, answering to the smile and nod of Alice with a look of open pleasure. Thence he went to the side of the motherly animal, and spending a minute in a fruitless inquiry into the character of her rider, he shook his head and returned to Heyward.

"A Mingo is a Mingo, and God having made him so, neither the Mohawks nor any other tribe can alter him," he said,

when he had regained his former position. "If we were alone, and you would leave that noble horse at the mercy of the wolves to-night, I could show you the way to Edward, myself, within an hour, for it lies only about an hour's journey hence; but with such ladies in your company 'tis impossible!"

"And why? they are fatigued, but they are quite equal to a ride of a few more miles."

"'Tis a natural impossibility!" repeated the scout; "I wouldn't walk a mile in these woods after night gets into them, in company with that runner, for the best rifle in the colonies. They are full of outlying Iroquois, and your mongrel Mohawk knows where to find them too well, to be my companion."

"Think you so?" said Heyward, leaning forward in the saddle, and dropping his voice nearly to a whisper; "I confess I have not been without my own suspicions, though I have endeavored to conceal them, and affected a confidence I have not always felt, on account of my companions. It was because I suspected him that I would follow no longer; making him, as you see, follow me."

"I knew he was one of the cheats as soon as I laid eyes on him!" returned the scout, placing a finger on his nose, in sign of caution. "The thief is leaning against the foot of the sugar sapling, that you can see over them bushes; his right leg is in a line with the bark of the tree, and," tapping his rifle, "I can take him from where I stand, between the ankle and the knee, with a single shot, putting an end to his tramping through the woods, for at least a month to come. If I should go back to him, the cunning varmint would suspect something, and be dodging through the trees like a frightened deer."

"It will not do. He may be innocent, and I dislike the act. Though, if I felt confident of his treachery —"

"'Tis a safe thing to calculate on the knavery of an Iroquois," said the scout, throwing his rifle forward, by a sort of instinctive movement.

"Hold!" interrupted Heyward, "it will not do — we must think of some other scheme; and yet, I have much reason to believe the rascal has deceived me."

The hunter, who had already abandoned his intention of maiming the runner, mused a moment, and then made a gesture, which instantly brought his two red companions to his side. They spoke together earnestly in the Delaware language, though in an undertone; and by the gestures of the white man, which were frequently directed towards the top of the sapling, it was evident he pointed out the situation of their hidden enemy. His companions were not long in comprehending his wishes, and laying aside their fire-arms, they parted, taking opposite sides of the path, and burying themselves in the thicket, with such cautious movements, that their steps were inaudible.

"Now, go you back," said the hunter, speaking again to Heyward, "and hold the imp in talk; these Mohicans here will take him without breaking his paint."

"Nay," said Heyward, proudly, "I will seize him myself."

"Hist! what could you do, mounted, against an Indian in the bushes?"

"I will dismount."

"And, think you, when he saw one of your feet out of the stirrup, he would wait for the other to be free? Whoever comes into the woods to deal with the natives, must use Indian fashions, if he would wish to prosper in his undertakings. Go, then, talk openly to the miscreant, and seem to believe him the truest friend you have on 'arth."

Heyward prepared to comply, though with strong disgust at the nature of the office he was compelled to execute. Each moment, however, pressed upon him a conviction of the critical situation in which he had suffered his invaluable trust to be involved through his own confidence. The sun had already disappeared, and the woods, suddenly deprived of his light,<sup>9</sup> were assuming a dusky hue, which keenly reminded him that the hour the savage usually chose for his most barbarous and remorseless acts of vengeance or hostility, was speedily drawing near. Stimulated by apprehension, he left the scout, who immediately entered into a loud conversation with the stranger that had so unceremoniously enlisted himself in the party of travellers that morning. In passing his gentler companions Heyward uttered a few words of encouragement, and was pleased to find that, though fatigued with the exercise of the day, they appeared to entertain no suspicion that their present embarrassment was other than the result of accident. Giving them reason to believe he was merely employed in a consultation concerning the future route, he spurred his charger, and drew the reins again, when the animal had carried him within a few yards of the place where the sullen runner still stood, leaning against the tree.

<sup>9</sup> The scene of this tale was in the 42d degree of latitude, where the twilight is never of long continuance.

"You may see, Magua," he said, endeavoring to assume an air of freedom and confidence, "that the night is closing around us, and yet we are no nearer to William Henry than when we left the encampment of Webb with the rising sun. You have missed the way, nor have I been more fortunate. But, happily we have fallen in with a hunter, he whom you hear talking to the singer, that is acquainted with the deer-paths and by-ways of the woods, and who promises to lead us to a place where we may rest securely till the morning."

The Indian riveted his glowing eyes on Heyward as he asked, in his imperfect English, "Is he alone?"

"Alone!" hesitatingly answered Heyward to whom deception was too new to be assumed without embarrassment. "O! not alone, surely, Magua, for you know that we are with him."

"Then Le Renard Subtil will go," returned the runner, coolly raising his little wallet from the place where it had lain at his feet; "and the pale-faces will see none but their own color."

"Go! Whom call you Le Renard?"

"'Tis the name his Canada fathers have given to Magua," returned the runner, with an air that manifested his pride at the distinction. "Night is the same as day to Le Subtil, when Munro waits for him."

"And what account will Le Renard give the chief of William Henry concerning his daughters? Will he dare to tell the hot-blooded Scotsman that his children are left without a guide, though Magua promised to be one?"

"Though the gray head has a loud voice, and a long arm, Le Renard will not hear him, or feel him, in the woods."

"But what will the Mohawks say? They will make him petticoats, and bid him stay in the wigwam with the women, for he is no longer to be trusted with the business of a man."

"Le Subtil knows the path to the great lakes, and he can find the bones of his fathers," was the answer of the unmoved runner.

"Enough, Magua," said Heyward; "are we not friends? Why should there be bitter words between us? Munro has promised you a gift for your services when performed, and I shall be your debtor for another. Rest your weary limbs, then, and open your wallet to eat. We have a few moments to spare; let us not waste them in talk like wrangling women. When the ladies are refreshed we will proceed."

"The pale-faces make themselves dogs to their women," muttered the Indian, in his native language, "and when they want to eat, their warriors must lay aside the tomahawk to feed their laziness."

"What say you, Renard?"

"Le Subtil says it is good."

The Indian then fastened his eyes keenly on the open countenance of Heyward, but meeting his glance, he turned them quickly away, and seating himself deliberately on the ground, he drew forth the remnant of some former repast, and began to eat, though not without first bending his looks slowly and cautiously around him.

"This is well," continued Heyward; "and Le Renard will have strength and sight to find the path in the morning;" he paused, for sounds like the snapping of a dried stick, and the rustling of leaves, rose from the adjacent bushes, but recollecting himself instantly, he continued — "we must be moving before the sun is seen, or Montcalm may lie in our path, and shut us out from the fortress."

The hand of Magua dropped from his mouth to his side, and though his eyes were fastened on the ground, his head was turned aside, his nostrils expanded, and his ears seemed even to stand more erect than usual, giving to him the appearance of a statue that was made to represent intense attention.

Heyward, who watched his movements with a vigilant eye, carelessly extricated one of his feet from the stirrup, while he passed a hand towards the bear-skin covering of his holsters. Every effort to detect the point most regarded by the runner was completely frustrated by the tremulous glances of his organs, which seemed not to rest a single instant on any particular object, and which, at the same time, could be hardly said to move. While he hesitated how to proceed, Le Subtil cautiously raised himself to his feet, though with a motion so slow and guarded, that not the slightest noise was produced by the change. Heyward felt it had now become incumbent on him to act. Throwing his leg over the saddle, he dismounted, with a determination to advance and seize his treacherous companion, trusting the result to his own manhood. In order, however, to prevent unnecessary alarm, he still preserved an air of calmness and friendship.

"Le Renard Subtil does not eat," he said, using the appellation he had found most flattering to the vanity of the Indian.



“His corn is not well parched, and it seems dry. Let me examine; perhaps something may be found among my own provisions that will help his appetite.”

Magua held out the wallet to the proffer of the other. He even suffered their hands to meet, without betraying the least emotion, or varying his riveted attitude of attention. But when he felt the fingers of Heyward moving gently along his own naked arm, he struck up the limb of the young man, and uttering a piercing cry as he darted beneath it, plunged, at a single bound, into the opposite thicket. At the next instant the form of Chingachgook appeared from the bushes, looking like a spectre in its paint, and glided across the path in swift pursuit. Next followed the shout of Uncas, when the woods were lighted by a sudden flash, that was accompanied by the sharp report of the hunter's rifle.



## CHAPTER 5.

*"In such a night  
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew;  
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself."*

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

The suddenness of the flight of his guide, and the wild cries of the pursuers, caused Heyward to remain fixed, for a few moments, in inactive surprise. Then recollecting the importance of securing the fugitive, he dashed aside the surrounding bushes, and pressed eagerly forward to lend his aid in the chase. Before he had, however, proceeded a hundred yards, he met the three foresters already returning from their unsuccessful pursuit.

"Why so soon disheartened!" he exclaimed; "the scoundrel must be concealed behind some of these trees, and may yet be secured. We are not safe while he goes at large."

"Would you set a cloud to chase the wind?" returned the disappointed scout; "I heard the imp, brushing over the dry leaves, like a black snake, and blinking a glimpse of him, just over ag'in yon big pine, I pulled as it might be on the scent; but 'twouldn't do! and yet for a reasoning aim, if anybody but myself had touched the trigger, I should call it a quick sight; and I may be accounted to have experience in these matters, and one who ought to know. Look at this sumach; its leaves are red, though everybody knows the fruit is in the yellow blossom, in the month of July!"

"'Tis the blood of Le Subtil! he is hurt, and may yet fall!"

"No, no," returned the scout, in decided disapprobation of this opinion, "I rubbed the bark off a limb, perhaps, but the creature leaped the longer for it. A rifle-bullet acts on a running animal, when it barks him, much the same as one of your spurs on a horse; that is, it quickens motion, and puts life into the flesh, instead of taking it away. But when it cuts the ragged hole, after a bound or two, there is, commonly, a stagnation of further leaping, be it Indian or be it deer!"

"We are four able bodies, to one wounded man!"

"Is life grievous to you?" interrupted the scout. "Yonder red devils would draw you within swing of the tomahawks of his comrades, before you were heated in the chase. It was an unthoughtful act in a man who has so often slept with the war-whoop ringing in the air, to let off his piece within sound of an ambushment! But then it was a natural temptation! 'twas very natural! Come, friends, let us move our station, and in such a fashion, too, as will throw the cunning of a Mingo on a wrong scent, or our scalps will be drying in the wind in front of Montcalm's marquee, ag'in this hour to-morrow."

This appalling declaration, which the scout uttered with the cool assurance of a man who fully comprehended, while he did not fear to face the danger, served to remind Heyward of the importance of the charge with which he himself had been intrusted. Glancing his eyes around, with a vain effort to pierce the gloom that was thickening beneath the leafy arches of the forest, he felt as if, cut off from human aid, his unresisting companions would soon lie at the entire mercy of those barbarous enemies, who, like beasts of prey, only waited till the gathering darkness might render their blows more fatally certain. His awakened imagination, deluded by the deceptive light, converted each waving bush, or the fragment of some fallen tree, into human forms, and twenty times he fancied he could distinguish the horrid visages of his lurking foes, peering from their hiding-places, in never-ceasing watchfulness of the movements of his party. Looking upward, he found that the thin fleecy clouds, which evening had painted on the blue sky, were already losing their faintest tints of rose-color, while the imbedded stream, which glided past the spot where he stood, was to be traced only by the dark boundary of its wooded banks.

"What is to be done?" he said, feeling the utter helplessness of doubt in such a pressing strait; "desert me not, for God's sake! remain to defend those I escort, and freely name your own reward!"

His companions, who conversed apart in the language of their tribe, heeded not this sudden and earnest appeal. Though their dialogue was maintained in low and cautious sounds, but little above a whisper, Heyward, who now approached, could easily distinguish the earnest tones of the younger warrior from the more deliberate speeches of his seniors. It was evident that they debated on the propriety of some measure that nearly concerned the welfare of the travellers. Yielding to his powerful interest in the subject, and impatient of a delay that seemed fraught with so much additional danger, Heyward drew still nigher to the dusky group, with an intention of making his offers of compensation

more definite, when the white man, motioning, with his hand, as if he conceded the disputed point, turned away, saying in a sort of soliloquy, and in the English tongue —

“Uncas is right! it would not be the act of men to leave such harmless things to their fate, even though it breaks up the harboring place forever. If you would save these tender blossoms from the fangs of the worst of serpents, gentleman, you have neither time to lose nor resolution to throw away!”

“How can such a wish be doubted! have I not already offered —”

“Offer your prayers to Him who can give us wisdom to circumvent the cunning of the devils who fill these woods,” calmly interrupted the scout, “but spare your offers of money, which neither you may live to realize, nor I to profit by. These Mohicans and I will do what man’s thoughts can invent, to keep such flowers, which, though so sweet, were never made for the wilderness, from harm, and that without hope of any other recompense but such as God always gives to upright dealings. First, you must promise two things, both in your own name and for your friends, or without serving you, we shall only injure ourselves!”

“Name them.”

“The one is, to be still as these sleeping woods, let what will happen; and the other is, to keep the place where we shall take you, forever a secret from all mortal men.”

“I will do my utmost to see both these conditions fulfilled.”

“Then follow, for we are losing moments that are as precious as the heart’s blood to a stricken deer!”

Heyward could distinguish the impatient gesture of the scout, through the increasing shadows of the evening, and he moved in his footsteps, swiftly, towards the place where he had left the remainder of his party. When they rejoined the expecting and anxious females, he briefly acquainted them with the conditions of their new guide, and with the necessity that existed for their hushing every apprehension, in instant and serious exertions. Although his alarming communication was not received without much secret terror by the listeners, his earnest and impressive manner, aided perhaps by the nature of the danger, succeeded in bracing their nerves to undergo some unlooked-for and unusual trial. Silently, and without a moment’s delay, they permitted him to assist them from their saddles, when they descended quickly to the water’s edge, where the scout had collected the rest of the party, more by the agency of expressive gestures than by any use of words.

“What to do with these dumb creatures!” muttered the white man, on whom the sole control of their future movements appeared to devolve; “it would be time lost to cut their throats, and cast them into the river; and to leave them here, would be to tell the Mingos that they have not far to seek to find their owners!”

“Then give them their bridles, and let them range the woods,” Heyward ventured to suggest.

“No; it would be better to mislead the imps, and make them believe they must equal a horse’s speed to run down their chase. Ay, ay, that will blind their fire-balls of eyes! Chingach — Hist? what stirs the bush?”

“The colt.”

“That colt, at least, must die,” muttered the scout, grasping the mane of the nimble beast, which easily eluded his hand; “Uncas, your arrows!”

“Hold!” exclaimed the proprietor of the condemned animal, aloud, without regard to the whispering tones used by the others; “spare the foal of Miriam! it is the comely offspring of a faithful dam, and would willingly injure naught.”

“When men struggle for the single life God has given them,” said the scout sternly, “even their own kind seem no more than the beasts of the wood. If you speak again, I shall leave you to the mercy of the Maquas! Draw to your arrow’s head, Uncas; we have no time for second blows.”

The low, muttering sounds of his threatening voice were still audible, when the wounded foal, first rearing on its hinder legs, plunged forward to its knees. It was met by Chingachgook, whose knife passed across its throat quicker than thought, and then precipitating the motions of the struggling victim, he dashed it into the river, down whose stream it glided away, gasping audibly for breath with its ebbing life. This deed of apparent cruelty, but of real necessity, fell upon the spirits of the travellers like a terrific warning of the peril in which they stood, heightened as it was by the calm though steady resolution of the actors in the scene. The sisters shuddered and clung closer to each other, while Heyward instinctively laid his hand on one of the pistols he had just drawn from their holsters, as he placed himself between his

charge and those dense shadows that seemed to draw an impenetrable veil before the bosom of the forest.

The Indians, however, hesitated not a moment, but taking the bridles, they led the frightened and reluctant horses into the bed of the river.

At a short distance from the shore they turned, and were soon concealed by the projection of the bank, under the brow of which they moved, in a direction opposite to the course of the waters. In the meantime, the scout drew a canoe of bark from its place of concealment beneath some low bushes, whose branches were waving with the eddies of the current, into which he silently motioned for the females to enter. They complied without hesitation, though many a fearful and anxious glance was thrown behind them towards the thickening gloom which now lay like a dark barrier along the margin of the stream.

So soon as Cora and Alice were seated, the scout, without regarding the element, directed Heyward to support one side of the frail vessel, and posting himself at the other, they bore it up against the stream, followed by the dejected owner of the dead foal. In this manner they proceeded, for many rods, in a silence that was only interrupted by the rippling of the water, as its eddies played around them, or the low dash made by their own cautious footsteps. Heyward yielded the guidance of the canoe implicitly to the scout, who approached or receded from the shore, to avoid the fragments of rocks, or deeper parts of the river, with a readiness that showed his knowledge of the route they held. Occasionally he would stop; and in the midst of a breathing stillness, that the dull but increasing roar of the waterfall only served to render more impressive, he would listen with painful intenseness, to catch any sounds that might arise from the slumbering forest. When assured that all was still, and unable to detect, even by the aid of his practised senses, any sign of his approaching foes, he would deliberately resume his slow and unguarded progress. At length they reached a point in the river, where the roving eye of Heyward became riveted on a cluster of black objects, collected at a spot where the high bank threw a deeper shadow than usual on the dark waters. Hesitating to advance, he pointed out the place to the attention of his companion.

“Ay,” returned the composed scout, “the Indians have hid the beasts with the judgment of natives! Water leaves no trail, and an owl’s eyes would be blinded by the darkness of such a hole.”

The whole party was soon reunited, and another consultation was held between the scout and his new comrades, during which, they whose fates depended on the faith and ingenuity of these unknown foresters, had a little leisure to observe their situation more minutely.

The river was confined between high and cragged rocks, one of which impended above the spot where the canoe rested. As these, again, were surmounted by tall trees, which appeared to totter on the brows of the precipice, it gave the stream the appearance of running through a deep and narrow dell. All beneath the fantastic limbs and ragged tree-tops, which were, here and there, dimly painted against the starry zenith, lay alike in shadowed obscurity. Behind them, the curvature of the banks soon bounded the view, by the same dark and wooded outline; but in front, and apparently at no great distance, the water seemed piled against the heavens, whence it tumbled into caverns, out of which issued those sullen sounds that had loaded the evening atmosphere. It seemed, in truth, to be a spot devoted to seclusion, and the sisters imbibed a soothing impression of security, as they gazed upon its romantic, though not unappalling beauties. A general movement among their conductors, however, soon recalled them from a contemplation of the wild charms that night had assisted to lend the place, to a painful sense of their real peril.

The horses had been secured to some scattered shrubs that grew in the fissures of the rocks, where, standing in the water, they were left to pass the night. The scout directed Heyward and his disconsolate fellow-travellers to seat themselves in the forward end of the canoe, and took possession of the other himself, as erect and steady as if he floated in a vessel of much firmer materials. The Indians warily retraced their steps towards the place they had left, when the scout, placing his pole against a rock, by a powerful shove, sent his frail bark directly into the centre of the turbulent stream. For many minutes the struggle between the light bubble in which they floated, and the swift current, was severe and doubtful. Forbidden to stir even a hand, and almost afraid to breathe, lest they should expose the frail fabric to the fury of the stream, the passengers watched the glancing waters in feverish suspense. Twenty times they thought the whirling eddies were sweeping them to destruction, when the master-hand of their pilot would bring the bows of the canoe to stem the rapid. A long, a vigorous, and, as it appeared to the females, a desperate effort, closed the struggle. Just as Alice veiled her eyes in horror, under the impression that they were about to be swept within the vortex at the foot of the cataract, the canoe floated, stationary, at the side of a flat rock, that lay on a level with the water.

"Where are we? and what is next to be done?" demanded Heyward, perceiving that the exertions of the scout had ceased.

"You are at the foot of Glenn's," returned the other, speaking aloud, without fear of consequences, within the roar of the cataract; "and the next thing is to make a steady landing, lest the canoe upset, and you should go down again the hard road we have travelled, faster than you came up; 'tis a hard rift to stem, when the river is a little swelled; and five is an unnatural number to keep dry, in the hurry-skurry, with a little birchen bark and gum. There, go you all on the rock, and I will bring up the Mohicans with the venison. A man had better sleep without his scalp, than famish in the midst of plenty."

His passengers gladly complied with these directions. As the last foot touched the rock, the canoe whirled from its station, when the tall form of the scout was seen, for an instant, gliding above the waters, before it disappeared in the impenetrable darkness that rested on the bed of the river. Left by their guide, the travellers remained a few minutes in helpless ignorance, afraid even to move along the broken rocks, lest a false step should precipitate them down some one of the many deep and roaring caverns, into which the water seemed to tumble, on every side of them. Their suspense, however, was soon relieved; for aided by the skill of the natives, the canoe shot back into the eddy, and floated again at the side of the low rock before they thought the scout had even time to rejoin his companions.

"We are now fortified, garrisoned, and provisioned," cried Heyward, cheerfully, "and may set Montcalm and his allies at defiance. How, now, my vigilant sentinel, can you see anything of those you call the Iroquois, on the mainland?"

"I call them Iroquois, because to me every native, who speaks a foreign tongue, is accounted an enemy, though he may pretend to serve the king! If Webb wants faith and honesty in an Indian, let him bring out the tribes of the Delawares, and send these greedy and lying Mohawks and Oneidas, with their six nations of varlets, where in nature they belong, among the French!"

"We should then exchange a warlike for a useless friend! I have heard that the Delawares have laid aside the hatchet, and are content to be called women!"

"Ay, shame on the Hollanders<sup>10</sup> and Iroquois, who circumvented them by their deviltries, into such a treaty! But I have known them for twenty years, and I call him liar, that says cowardly blood runs in the veins of a Delaware. You have driven their tribes from the sea-shore, and would now believe what their enemies say, that you may sleep at night upon an easy pillow. No, no; to me, every Indian who speaks a foreign tongue is an Iroquois, whether the castle<sup>11</sup> of his tribe be in Canada, or be in New York."

<sup>10</sup> The reader will remember that New York was originally a colony of the Dutch.

<sup>11</sup> The principal villages of the Indians are still called "castles" by the whites of New York. "Oneida castle" is no more than a scattered hamlet; but the name is in general use.

Heyward, perceiving that the stubborn adherence of the scout to the cause of his friends the Delawares or Mohicans, for they were branches of the same numerous people, was likely to prolong a useless discussion, changed the subject.

"Treaty or no treaty, I know full well, that your two companions are brave and cautious warriors! have they heard or seen anything of our enemies?"

"An Indian is a mortal to be felt afore he is seen," returned the scout, ascending the rock, and throwing the deer carelessly down. "I trust to other signs than such as come in at the eye, when I am outlying on the trail of the Mingos."

"Do your ears tell you that they have traced our retreat?"

"I should be sorry to think they had, though this is a spot that stout courage might hold for a smart skirmish. I will not deny, however, but the horses cowered when I passed them, as though they scented the wolves; and a wolf is a beast that is apt to hover about an Indian ambushment, craving the offals of the deer the savages kill."

"You forget the buck at your feet! or, may we not owe their visit to the dead colt? Ha! what noise is that?"

"Poor Miriam!" murmured the stranger; "thy foal was foreordained to become a prey to ravenous beasts!" Then, suddenly lifting up his voice, amid the eternal din of the waters, he sang aloud —

"First born of Egypt, smite did He,  
Of mankind, and of beast also;  
O, Egypt! wonders sent 'midst thee,  
On Pharaoh and his servants too!"

“The death of the colt sits heavy on the heart of its owner,” said the scout; “but it’s a good sign to see a man account upon his dumb friends. He has the religion of the matter, in believing what is to happen will happen; and with such a consolation, it won’t be long afore he submits to the rationality of killing a four-footed beast, to save the lives of human men. It may be as you say,” he continued, reverting to the purport of Heyward’s last remark; “and the greater the reason why we should cut our steaks, and let the carcase drive down the stream, or we shall have the pack howling along the cliffs, begrudging every mouthful we swallow. Besides, though the Delaware tongue is the same as a book to the Iroquois, the cunning varlets are quick enough at understanding the reason of a wolf’s howl.”

The scout, whilst making his remarks, was busied in collecting certain necessary implements; as he concluded, he moved silently by the group of travellers, accompanied by the Mohicans, who seemed to comprehend his intentions with instinctive readiness, when the whole three disappeared in succession, seeming to vanish against the dark face of a perpendicular rock, that rose to the height of a few yards within as many feet of the water’s edge.



## CHAPTER 6.

*"Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide;  
He wales a portion with judicious care;  
And 'Let us worship God,' he says, with solemn air."*

—BURNS.

Heyward, and his female companions, witnessed this mysterious movement with secret uneasiness; for, though the conduct of the white man had hitherto been above reproach, his rude equipments, blunt address, and strong antipathies, together with the character of his silent associates, were all causes for exciting distrust in minds that had been so recently alarmed by Indian treachery.

The stranger alone disregarded the passing incidents. He seated himself on a projection of the rocks, whence he gave no other signs of consciousness than by the struggles of his spirit, as manifested in frequent and heavy sighs. Smothered voices were next heard, as though men called to each other in the bowels of the earth, when a sudden light flashed upon those without, and laid bare the much-prized secret of the place.

At the farther extremity of a narrow, deep cavern in the rock, whose length appeared much extended by the perspective and the nature of the light by which it was seen, was seated the scout, holding a blazing knot of pine. The strong glare of the fire fell full upon his sturdy, weather-beaten countenance and forest attire, lending an air of romantic wildness to the aspect of an individual, who, seen by the sober light of day, would have exhibited the peculiarities of a man remarkable for the strangeness of his dress, the iron-like inflexibility of his frame, and the singular compound of quick, vigilant sagacity, and of exquisite simplicity, that by turns usurped the possession of his muscular features. At a little distance in advance stood Uncas, his whole person thrown powerfully into view. The travellers anxiously regarded the upright, flexible figure of the young Mohican, graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature. Though his person was more than usually screened by a green and fringed hunting-shirt, like that of the white man, there was no concealment to his dark, glancing, fearless eye, alike terrible and calm; the bold outline of his high, haughty features, pure in their native red; or to the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft. It was the first opportunity possessed by Duncan and his companions, to view the marked lineaments of either of their Indian attendants, and each individual of the party felt relieved from a burden of doubt, as the proud and determined, though wild expression of the features of the young warrior forced itself on their notice. They felt it might be a being partially benighted in the vale of ignorance, but it could not be one who would willingly devote his rich natural gifts to the purposes of wanton treachery. The ingenuous Alice gazed at his free air and proud carriage, as she would have looked upon some precious relic of the Grecian chisel, to which life had been imparted by the intervention of a miracle; while Heyward, though accustomed to see the perfection of form which abounds among the uncorrupted natives, openly expressed his admiration at such an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man.

"I could sleep in peace," whispered Alice, in reply, "with such a fearless and generous looking youth for my sentinel. Surely, Duncan, those cruel murders, those terrific scenes of torture, of which we read and hear so much, are never acted in the presence of such as he!"

"This, certainly, is a rare and brilliant instance of those natural qualities, in which these peculiar people are said to excel," he answered. "I agree with you, Alice, in thinking that such a front and eye were formed rather to intimidate than to deceive; but let us not practise a deception upon ourselves, by expecting any other exhibition of what we esteem virtue than according to the fashion of a savage. As bright examples of great qualities are but too uncommon among Christians, so are they singular and solitary with the Indians; though, for the honor of our common nature, neither are incapable of producing them. Let us then hope that this Mohican may not disappoint our wishes, but prove, what his looks assert him to be, a brave and constant friend."

"Now Major Heyward speaks as Major Heyward should," said Cora; "who, that looks at this creature of nature, remembers the shade of his skin!"

A short, and apparently an embarrassed silence succeeded this remark, which was interrupted by the scout calling to them, aloud, to enter.

"This fire begins to show too bright a flame," he continued, as they complied, "and might light the Mingos to our

undoing. Uncas, drop the blanket, and show the knaves its dark side. This is not such a supper as a major of the Royal Americans has a right to expect, but I've known stout detachments of the corps glad to eat their venison raw, and without a relish too.<sup>12</sup> Here, you see, we have plenty of salt, and can make a quick broil. There's fresh sassafras boughs for the ladies to sit on, which may not be as proud as their my-hog-guinea chairs, but which sends up a sweeter flavor than the skin of any hog can do, be it of Guinea, or be it of any other land. Come, friend, don't be mournful for the colt; 'twas an innocent thing, and had not seen much hardship. Its death will save the creature many a sore back and weary foot!"

<sup>12</sup> In vulgar parlance the condiments of a repast are called by the American "a relish," substituting the thing for its effect. These provincial terms are frequently put in the mouths of the speakers, according to their several conditions in life. Most of them are of local use, and others quite peculiar to the particular class of men to which the character belongs. In the present instance, the scout uses the word with immediate reference to the salt, with which his own party was so fortunate as to be provided.

Uncas did as the other had directed, and when the voice of Hawkeye ceased, the roar of the cataract sounded like the rumbling of distant thunder.

"Are we quite safe in this cavern?" demanded Heyward. "Is there no danger of surprise? A single armed man, at its entrance, would hold us at his mercy."

A spectral-looking figure stalked from out the darkness behind the scout, and seizing a blazing brand, held it towards the farther extremity of their place of retreat. Alice uttered a faint shriek, and even Cora rose to her feet, as this appalling object moved into the light; but a single word from Heyward calmed them, with the assurance it was only their attendant, Chingachgook, who, lifting another blanket, discovered that the cavern had two outlets. Then, holding the brand, he crossed a deep, narrow chasm in the rocks, which ran at right angles with the passage they were in, but which, unlike that, was open to the heavens, and entered another cave, answering to the description of the first, in every essential particular.

"Such old foxes as Chingachgook and myself are not often caught in a burrow with one hole," said Hawkeye, laughing; "you can easily see the cunning of the place — the rock is black limestone, which everybody knows is soft; it makes no uncomfortable pillow, where brush and pine wood is scarce; well, the fall was once a few yards below us, and I dare to say was, in its time, as regular and as handsome a sheet of water as any along the Hudson. But old age is a great injury to good looks, as these sweet young ladies have yet to l'arn! The place is sadly changed! These rocks are full of cracks, and in some places they are softer than at othersome, and the water has worked out deep hollows for itself, until it has fallen back, ay, some hundred feet, breaking here and wearing there, until the falls have neither shape nor consistency."

"In what part of them are we?" asked Heyward.

"Why, we are nigh the spot that Providence first placed them at, but where, it seems, they were too rebellious to stay. The rock proved softer on each side of us, and so they left the centre of the river bare and dry, first working out these two little holes for us to hide in."

"We are then on an island?"

"Ay! there are the falls on two sides of us, and the river above and below. If you had daylight, it would be worth the trouble to step up on the height of this rock, and look at the perversity of the water. It falls by no rule at all; sometimes it leaps, sometimes it tumbles; there, it skips; here, it shoots; in one place 'tis white as snow, and in another 'tis green as grass; hereabouts, it pitches into deep hollows, that rumble and quake the 'arth; and hereaway, it ripples and sings like a brook, fashioning whirlpools and gulleys in the old stone, as it 'twas no harder than trodden clay. The whole design of the river seems disconcerted. First it runs smoothly, as if meaning to go down the descent as things were ordered; then it angles about and faces the shores; nor are there places wanting where it looks backward, as if unwilling to leave the wilderness, to mingle with the salt! Ay, lady, the fine cobweb-looking cloth you wear at your throat, is coarse, and like a fish-net, to little spots I can show you, where the river fabricates all sorts of images, as if, having broke loose from order, it would try its hand at everything. And yet what does it amount to! After the water has been suffered to have its will, for a time, like a headstrong man, it is gathered together by the hand that made it, and a few rods below you may see it all, flowing on steadily towards the sea, as was foreordained from the first foundation of the 'arth!"

While his auditors received a cheering assurance of the security of their place of concealment, from this untutored description of Glenn's,<sup>13</sup> they were much inclined to judge differently from Hawkeye, of its wild beauties. But they were not in a situation to suffer their thoughts to dwell on the charms of natural objects; and, as the scout had not found it necessary to cease his culinary labors while he spoke, unless to point out, with a broken fork, the direction of some particularly obnoxious point in the rebellious stream, they now suffered their attention to be drawn to the necessary, though more



vulgar consideration of their supper.

<sup>13</sup> Glenn's Falls are on the Hudson, some forty or fifty miles above the head of tide, or the place where that river becomes navigable for sloops. The description of this picturesque and remarkable little cataract, as given by the scout, is sufficiently correct, though the application of the water to the uses of civilized life has materially injured its beauties. The rocky island and the two caverns are well known to every traveller, since the former sustains a pier of a bridge, which is now thrown across the river, immediately above the fall. In explanation of the taste of Hawkeye, it should be remembered that men always prize that most which is least enjoyed. Thus, in a new country, the woods and other objects, which in an old country would be maintained at great cost, are got rid of, simply with a view of "improving," as it is called.

The repast, which was greatly aided by the addition of a few delicacies that Heyward had the precaution to bring with him when they left their horses, was exceedingly refreshing to the wearied party. Uncas acted as attendant to the females, performing all the little offices within his power, with a mixture of dignity and anxious grace, that served to amuse Heyward, who well knew that it was an utter innovation on the Indian customs, which forbid their warriors to descend to any menial employment, especially in favor of their women. As the rites of hospitality were, however, considered sacred among them, this little departure from the dignity of manhood excited no audible comment. Had there been one there sufficiently disengaged to become a close observer, he might have fancied that the services of the young chief were not entirely impartial. That while he tendered to Alice the gourd of sweet water and the venison in a trencher, neatly carved from the knot of the pepperidge, with sufficient courtesy, in performing the same offices to her sister, his dark eye lingered on her rich, speaking countenance. Once or twice he was compelled to speak, to command the attention of those he served. In such cases, he made use of English, broken and imperfect, but sufficiently intelligible, and which he rendered so mild and musical, by his deep,<sup>14</sup> guttural voice, that it never failed to cause both ladies to look up in admiration and astonishment. In the course of these civilities, a few sentences were exchanged, that served to establish the appearance of an amicable intercourse between the parties.

<sup>14</sup> The meaning of Indian words is much governed by the emphasis and tones.

In the meanwhile, the gravity of Chingachgook remained immovable. He had seated himself more within the circle of light, where the frequent uneasy glances of his guests were better enabled to separate the natural expression of his face from the artificial terrors of the war-paint. They found a strong resemblance between father and son, with the difference that might be expected from age and hardships. The fierceness of his countenance now seemed to slumber, and in its place was to be seen the quiet, vacant composure, which distinguishes an Indian warrior, when his faculties are not required for any of the greater purposes of his existence. It was, however, easy to be seen, by the occasional gleams that shot across his swarthy visage, that it was only necessary to arouse his passions, in order to give full effect to the terrific device which he had adopted to intimidate his enemies. On the other hand, the quick, roving eye of the scout seldom rested. He ate and drank with an appetite that no sense of danger could disturb, but his vigilance seemed never to desert him. Twenty times the gourd or the venison was suspended before his lips, while his head was turned aside, as though he listened to some distant and distrusted sounds — a movement that never failed to recall his guests from regarding the novelties of their situation, to a recollection of the alarming reasons that had driven them to seek it. As these frequent pauses were never followed by any remark, the momentary uneasiness they created quickly passed away, and for a time was forgotten.

"Come, friend," said Hawkeye, drawing out a keg from beneath a cover of leaves, towards the close of the repast, and addressing the stranger who sat at his elbow, doing great justice to his culinary skill, "try a little spruce; 'twill wash away all thoughts of the colt, and quicken the life in your bosom. I drink to our better friendship, hoping that a little horse-flesh may leave no heartburnings atween us. How do you name yourself?"

"Gamut — David Gamut," returned the singing-master, preparing to wash down his sorrows in a powerful draught of the woodman's high-flavored and well-laced compound.

"A very good name, and, I dare say, handed down from honest forefathers. I'm an admirator of names, though the Christian fashions fall far below savage customs in this particular. The biggest coward I ever knew was called Lyon; and his wife, Patience, would scold you out of hearing in less time than a hunted deer would run a rod. With an Indian 'tis a matter of conscience; what he calls himself, he generally is — not that Chingachgook, which signifies Big Serpent, is really a snake, big or little; but that he understands the windings and turnings of human nature, and is silent, and strikes his enemies when they least expect him. What may be your calling?"

"I am an unworthy instructor in the art of psalmody."

"Anan!"

"I teach singing to the youths, of the Connecticut levy."

"You might be better employed. The young hounds go laughing and singing too much already through the woods, when they ought not to breathe louder than a fox in his cover. Can you use the smooth bore, or handle the rifle?"

"Praised be God, I have never had occasion to meddle with murderous implements!"

"Perhaps you understand the compass, and lay down the water-courses and mountains of the wilderness on paper, in order that they who follow may find places by their given names?"

"I practise no such employment."

"You have a pair of legs that might make a long path seem short! you journey sometimes, I fancy, with tidings for the general."

"Never; I follow no other than my own high vocation, which is instruction in sacred music!"

"'Tis a strange calling!" muttered Hawkeye, with an inward laugh, "to go through life, like a catbird, mocking all the ups and downs that may happen to come out of other men's throats. Well, friend, I suppose it is your gift, and mustn't be denied any more than if 'twas shooting, or some other better inclination. Let us hear what you can do in that way; 'twill be a friendly manner of saying good-night, for 'tis time that these ladies should be getting strength for a hard and a long push, in the pride of the morning, afore the Maquas are stirring!"

"With joyful pleasure do I consent," said David, adjusting his iron-rimmed spectacles, and producing his beloved little volume, which he immediately tendered to Alice. "What can be more fitting and consolatory, than to offer up evening praise, after a day of such exceeding jeopardy!"

Alice smiled; but regarding Heyward, she blushed and hesitated.

"Indulge yourself," he whispered: "ought not the suggestion of the worthy namesake of the Psalmist to have its weight at such a moment?"

Encouraged by his opinion, Alice did what her pious inclinations and her keen relish for gentle sounds, had before so strongly urged. The book was open at a hymn not ill adapted to their situation, and in which the poet, no longer goaded by his desire to excel the inspired king of Israel, had discovered some chastened and respectable powers. Cora betrayed a disposition to support her sister, and the sacred song proceeded, after the indispensable preliminaries of the pitch-pipe and the tune had been duly attended to by the methodical David.

The air was solemn and slow. At times it rose to the fullest compass of the rich voices of the females, who hung over their little book in holy excitement, and again it sank so low, that the rushing of the waters ran through their melody, like a hollow accompaniment. The natural taste and true ear of David governed and modified the sounds to suit the confined cavern, every crevice, and cranny of which was filled with the thrilling notes of their flexible voices. The Indians riveted their eyes on the rocks, and listened with an attention that seemed to turn them into stone. But the scout, who had placed his chin in his hand, with an expression of cold indifference, gradually suffered his rigid features to relax, until, as verse succeeded verse, he felt his iron nature subdued, while his recollection was carried back to boyhood, when his ears had been accustomed to listen to similar sounds of praise, in the settlements of the colony. His roving eyes began to moisten, and before the hymn was ended, scalding tears rolled out of fountains that had long seemed dry, and followed each other down those cheeks, that had oftener felt the storms of heaven than any testimonials of weakness. The singers were dwelling on one of those low, dying chords, which the ear devours with such greedy rapture, as if conscious that it is about to lose them, when a cry, that seemed neither human nor earthly, rose in the outward air, penetrating not only the recesses of the cavern, but to the inmost hearts of all who heard it. It was followed by a stillness apparently as deep as if the waters had been checked in their furious progress, at such a horrid and unusual interruption.

"What is it?" murmured Alice, after a few moments of terrible suspense.

"What is it?" repeated Heyward aloud.

Neither Hawkeye nor the Indians made any reply. They listened, as if expecting the sound would be repeated, with a manner that expressed their own astonishment. At length they spoke together earnestly, in the Delaware language, when Uncas, passing by the inner and most concealed aperture, cautiously left the cavern. When he had gone, the scout first spoke in English.

"What it is, or what it is not, none here can tell; though two of us have ranged the woods for more than thirty years! I

did believe there was no cry that Indians or beast could make, that my ears had not heard; but this has proved that I was only a vain and conceited mortal!"

"Was it not, then, the shout the warriors make when they wish to intimidate their enemies?" asked Cora, who stood drawing her veil about her person, with a calmness to which her agitated sister was a stranger.

"No, no; this was bad, and shocking, and had a sort of unhuman sound; but when you once hear the war-whoop, you will never mistake it for anything else! Well, Uncas!" speaking in Delaware to the young chief as he re-entered, "what see you? do our lights shine through the blankets?"

The answer was short, and apparently decided, being given in the same tongue.

"There is nothing to be seen without," continued Hawkeye, shaking his head in discontent; "and our hiding-place is still in darkness! Pass into the other cave, you that need it, and seek for sleep; we must be afoot long before the sun, and make the most of our time to get to Edward, while the Mingos are taking their morning nap."

Cora set the example of compliance, with a steadiness that taught the more timid Alice the necessity of obedience. Before leaving the place, however, she whispered a request to Duncan that he would follow. Uncas raised the blanket for their passage, and as the sisters turned to thank him for this act of attention, they saw the scout seated again before the dying embers, with his face resting on his hands, in a manner which showed how deeply he brooded on the unaccountable interruption which had broken up their evening devotions.

Heyward took with him a blazing knot, which threw a dim light through the narrow vista of their new apartment. Placing it in a favorable position, he joined the females, who now found themselves alone with him for the first time since they had left the friendly ramparts of Fort Edward.

"Leave us not, Duncan," said Alice; "we cannot sleep in such a place as this, with that horrid cry still ringing in our ears!"

"First let us examine into the security of your fortress," he answered, "and then we will speak of rest."

He approached the farther end of the cavern, to an outlet, which, like the others, was concealed by blankets, and removing the thick screen, breathed the fresh and reviving air from the cataract. One arm of the river flowed through a deep, narrow ravine, which its current had worn in the soft rock, directly beneath his feet, forming an effectual defence, as he believed, against any danger from that quarter; the water, a few rods above them, plunging, glancing, and sweeping along, in its most violent and broken manner.

"Nature has made an impenetrable barrier on this side," he continued, pointing down the perpendicular declivity into the dark current, before he dropped the blanket; "and as you know that good men and true are on guard in front, I see no reason why the advice of our honest host should be disregarded. I am certain Cora will join me in saying that sleep is necessary to you both."

"Cora may submit to the justice of your opinion, though she cannot put it in practise," returned the elder sister, who had placed herself by the side of Alice, on a couch of sassafras; "there would be other causes to chase away sleep, though we had been spared the shock of this mysterious noise. Ask yourself, Heyward, can daughters forget the anxiety a father must endure, whose children lodge, he knows not where or how, in such a wilderness, and in the midst of so many perils?"

"He is a soldier, and knows how to estimate the chances of the woods."

"He is a father, and cannot deny his nature."

"How kind has he ever been to all my follies! how tender and indulgent to all my wishes!" sobbed Alice. "We have been selfish, sister, in urging our visit at such hazard!"

"I may have been rash in pressing his consent in a moment of much embarrassment, but I would have proved to him, that however others might neglect him in his strait, his children at least were faithful!"

"When he heard of your arrival at Edward," said Heyward, kindly, "there was a powerful struggle in his bosom between fear and love; though the latter, heightened, if possible, by so long a separation, quickly prevailed. 'It is the spirit of my noble-minded Cora that leads them, Duncan,' he said, 'and I will not balk it. Would to God, that he who holds the honor of our royal master in his guardianship, would show but half her firmness!'"

"And did he not speak of me, Heyward?" demanded Alice, with jealous affection. "Surely, he forgot not altogether his little Elsie?"

“That was impossible,” returned the young man; “he called you by a thousand endearing epithets, that I may not presume to use, but to the justice of which I can warmly testify. Once, indeed, he said —”

Duncan ceased speaking; for while his eyes were riveted on those of Alice, who had turned towards him with the eagerness of filial affection, to catch his words, the same strong horrid cry, as before, filled the air, and rendered him mute. A long, breathless silence succeeded, during which each looked at the others in fearful expectation of hearing the sound repeated. At length the blanket was slowly raised, and the scout stood in the aperture with a countenance whose firmness evidently began to give way, before a mystery that seemed to threaten some danger, against which all his cunning and experience might prove of no avail.



## CHAPTER 7.

*"They do not sleep.  
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,  
I see them sit."*

—GRAY.

“Would be neglecting a warning that is given for our good, to lie hid any longer,” said Hawkeye, “when such sounds are raised in the forest! The gentle ones may keep close, but the Mohicans and I will watch upon the rock, where I suppose a major of the 60th would wish to keep us company.”

“Is then our danger so pressing?” asked Cora.

“He who makes strange sounds, and gives them out for man’s information, alone knows our danger. I should think myself wicked, unto rebellion against his will, was I to burrow with such warnings in the air! Even the weak soul who passes his days in singing, is stirred by the cry, and, as he says, is ‘ready to go forth to the battle.’ If ’twere only a battle, it would be a thing understood by us all, and easily managed; but I have heard that when such shrieks are atween heaven and ’arth, it betokens another sort of warfare!”

“If all our reasons for fear, my friend, are confined to such as proceed from supernatural causes, we have but little occasion to be alarmed,” continued the undisturbed Cora; “are you certain that our enemies have not invented some new and ingenious method to strike us with terror, that their conquest may become more easy?”

“Lady,” returned the scout, solemnly, “I have listened to all the sounds of the woods for thirty years, as a man will listen, whose life and death depend on the quickness of his ears. There is no whine of the panther, no whistle of the catbird, nor any invention of the devilish Mingos, that can cheat me! I have heard the forest moan like mortal men in their affliction; often, and again, have I listened to the wind playing its music in the branches of the girdled trees; and I have heard the lightning cracking in the air, like the snapping of blazing brush, as it spitted forth sparks and forked flames; but never have I thought that I heard more than the pleasure of Him who sported with the things of his hand. But neither the Mohicans, nor I, who am a white man without a cross, can explain the cry just heard. We, therefore, believe it a sign given for our good.”

“It is extraordinary!” said Heyward, taking his pistols from the place where he had laid them on entering; “be it a sign of peace or a signal of war, it must be looked to. Lead the way, my friend; I follow.”

On issuing from their place of confinement, the whole party instantly experienced a grateful renovation of spirits, by exchanging the pent air of the hiding-place for the cool and invigorating atmosphere, which played around the whirlpools and pitches of the cataract. A heavy evening breeze swept along the surface of the river, and seemed to drive the roar of the falls into the recesses of their own caverns, whence it issued heavily and constant, like thunder rumbling beyond the distant hills. The moon had risen, and its light was already glancing here and there on the waters above them; but the extremity of the rock where they stood still lay in shadow. With the exception of the sounds produced by the rushing waters, and an occasional breathing of the air, as it murmured past them in fitful currents, the scene was as still as night and solitude could make it. In vain were the eyes of each individual bent along the opposite shores, in quest of some signs of life, that might explain the nature of the interruption they had heard. Their anxious and eager looks were baffled by the deceptive light, or rested only on naked rocks, and straight and immovable trees.

“There is nothing to be seen but the gloom and quiet of a lovely evening,” whispered Duncan: “how much should we prize such a scene, and all this breathing solitude, at any other moment, Cora! Fancy yourselves in security and what now, perhaps, increases your terror, may be made conducive to enjoyment —”

“Listen!” interrupted Alice.

The caution was unnecessary. Once more the same sound arose, as if from the bed of the river, and having broken out of the narrow bounds of the cliffs, was heard undulating through the forest, in distant and dying cadences.

“Can any here give a name to such a cry?” demanded Hawkeye, when the last echo was lost in the woods; “if so, let him speak; for myself, I judge it not to belong to ‘arth!’”

“Here, then, is one who can undeceive you,” said Duncan; “I know the sound full well, for often have I heard it on the

field of battle, and in situations which are frequent in a soldier's life. 'Tis the horrid shriek that a horse will give in his agony; oftener drawn from him in pain, though sometimes in terror. My charger is either a prey to the beasts of the forest, or he sees his danger, without the power to avoid it. The sound might deceive me in the cavern, but in the open air I know it too well to be wrong."

The scout and his companions listened to this simple explanation with the interest of men who imbibe new ideas, at the same time that they get rid of old ones, which had proved disagreeable inmates. The two latter uttered their usual and expressive exclamation, "Hugh!" as the truth first glanced upon their minds, while the former, after a short musing pause, took upon himself to reply.

"I cannot deny your words," he said; "for I am little skilled in horses, though born where they abound. The wolves must be hovering above their heads on the bank, and the timorous creatures are calling on man for help, in the best manner they are able. Uncas,"— he spoke in Delaware —"Uncas, drop down in the canoe, and whirl a brand among the pack; or fear may do what the wolves can't get at to perform, and leave us without horses in the morning, when we shall have so much need to journey swiftly!"

The young native had already descended to the water, to comply, when a long howl was raised on the edge of the river, and was borne swiftly off into the depths of the forest, as though the beasts, of their own accord, were abandoning their prey in sudden terror. Uncas, with instinctive quickness, receded, and the three foresters held another of their low, earnest conferences.

"We have been like hunters who have lost the points of the heavens, and from whom the sun has been hid for days," said Hawkeye, turning away from his companions; "now we begin again to know the signs of our course, and the paths are cleared from briers! Seat yourselves in the shade which the moon throws from yonder beech —'tis thicker than that of the pines — and let us wait for that which the Lord may choose to send next. Let all your conversation be in whispers; though it would be better, and perhaps, in the end, wiser, if each one held discourse with his own thoughts, for a time."

The manner of the scout was seriously impressive, though no longer distinguished by any signs of unmanly apprehension. It was evident that his momentary weakness had vanished with the explanation of a mystery which his own experience had not served to fathom; and though he now felt all the realities of their actual condition, that he was prepared to meet them with the energy of his hardy nature. This feeling seemed also common to the natives, who placed themselves in positions which commanded a full view of both shores, while their own persons were effectually concealed from observation. In such circumstances, common prudence dictated that Heyward and his companions should imitate a caution that proceeded from so intelligent a source. The young man drew a pile of the sassafras from the cave, and placing it in the chasm which separated the two caverns, it was occupied by the sisters, who were thus protected by the rocks from any missiles, while their anxiety was relieved by the assurance that no danger could approach without a warning. Heyward himself was posted at hand, so near that he might communicate with his companions without raising his voice to a dangerous elevation, while David, in imitation of the woodsmen, bestowed his person in such a manner among the fissures of the rocks, that his ungainly limbs were no longer offensive to the eye.

In this manner, hours passed by without further interruption. The moon reached the zenith, and shed its mild light perpendicularly on the lovely sight of the sisters slumbering peacefully in each other's arms. Duncan cast the wide shawl of Cora before a spectacle he so much loved to contemplate, and then suffered his own head to seek a pillow on the rock. David began to utter sounds that would have shocked his delicate organs in more wakeful moments; in short, all but Hawkeye and the Mohicans lost every idea of consciousness, in uncontrollable drowsiness. But the watchfulness of these vigilant protectors neither tired nor slumbered. Immovable as that rock, of which each appeared to form a part, they lay, with their eyes roving, without intermission, along the dark margin of trees that bounded the adjacent shores of the narrow stream. Not a sound escaped them; the most subtle examination could not have told they breathed. It was evident that this excess of caution proceeded from an experience that no subtlety on the part of their enemies could deceive. It was, however, continued without any apparent consequences, until the moon had set, and a pale streak above the tree-tops, at the bend of the river a little below, announced the approach of day.

Then, for the first time, Hawkeye was seen to stir. He crawled along the rock, and shook Duncan from his heavy slumbers.

"Now is the time to journey," he whispered; "awake the gentle ones, and be ready to get into the canoe when I bring it

to the landing-place."

"Have you had a quiet night?" said Heyward; "for myself, I believe sleep has got the better of my vigilance."

"All is yet still as midnight. Be silent, but be quick."

By this time Duncan was thoroughly awake, and he immediately lifted the shawl from the sleeping females. The motion caused Cora to raise her hand as if to repulse him, while Alice murmured, in her soft, gentle voice, "No, no, dear father, we were not deserted; Duncan was with us!"

"Yes, sweet innocence," whispered the youth; "Duncan is here, and while life continues or danger remains, he will never quit thee. Cora! Alice! awake! The hour has come to move!"

A loud shriek from the younger of the sisters, and the form of the other standing upright before him, in bewildered horror, was the unexpected answer he received. While the words were still on the lips of Heyward, there had arisen such a tumult of yells and cries as served to drive the swift currents of his own blood back from its bounding course into the fountains of his heart. It seemed, for near a minute, as if demons of hell had possessed themselves of the air about them, and were venting their savage humors in barbarous sounds. The cries came from no particular direction, though it was evident they filled the woods, and as the appalled listeners easily imagined, the caverns of the falls, the rocks, the bed of the river, and the upper air. David raised his tall person in the midst of the infernal din, with a hand on either ear, exclaiming —

"Whence comes this discord! Has hell broke loose, that man should utter sounds like these!"

The bright flashes and the quick reports of a dozen rifles, from the opposite banks of the stream, followed this incautious exposure of his person, and left the unfortunate singing-master senseless on that rock where he had been so long slumbering. The Mohicans boldly sent back the intimidating yell of their enemies, who raised a shout of savage triumph at the fall of Gamut. The flash of rifles was then quick and close between them, but either party was too well skilled to leave even a limb exposed to the hostile aim. Duncan listened with intense anxiety for the strokes of the paddle, believing that flight was now their only refuge. The river glanced by with its ordinary velocity, but the canoe was nowhere to be seen on its dark waters. He had just fancied they were cruelly deserted by the scout, as a stream of flame issued from the rock beneath him, and a fierce yell, blended with a shriek of agony, announced that the messenger of death, sent from the fatal weapon of Hawkeye, had found a victim. At this slight repulse the assailants instantly withdrew, and gradually the place became as still as before the sudden tumult.

Duncan seized the favorable moment to spring to the body of Gamut, which he bore within the shelter of the narrow chasm that protected the sisters. In another minute the whole party was collected in this spot of comparative safety.

"The poor fellow has saved his scalp," said Hawkeye, coolly passing his hand over the head of David; "but he is a proof that a man may be born with too long a tongue! 'Twas downright madness to show six feet of flesh and blood, on a naked rock, to the raging savages. I only wonder he has escaped with life."

"Is he not dead!" demanded Cora, in a voice whose husky tones showed how powerfully natural horror struggled with her assumed firmness. "Can we do aught to assist the wretched man?"

"No, no! the life is in his heart yet, and after he has slept awhile he will come to himself, and be a wiser man for it, till the hour of his real time shall come," returned Hawkeye, casting another oblique glance at the insensible body, while he filled his charger with admirable nicety. "Carry him in, Uncas, and lay him on the sassafras. The longer his nap lasts the better it will be for him, as I doubt whether he can find a proper cover for such a shape on these rocks; and singing won't do any good with the Iroquois."

"You believe, then, the attack will be renewed?" asked Heyward.

"Do I expect a hungry wolf will satisfy his craving with a mouthful! They have lost a man, and 'tis their fashion, when they meet a loss, and fail in the surprise, to fall back; but we shall have them on again, with new expedients to circumvent us, and master our scalps. Our main hope," he continued, raising his rugged countenance, across which a shade of anxiety just then passed like a darkening cloud, "will be to keep the rock until Munro can send a party to our help! God send it may be soon, and under a leader that knows the Indian customs!"

"You hear our probable fortunes, Cora," said Duncan, "and you know we have everything to hope from the anxiety and experience of your father. Come, then, with Alice, into this cavern, where you, at least, will be safe from the murderous rifles of our enemies and where you may bestow a care suited to your gentle natures on our unfortunate comrade."

The sisters followed him into the outer cave, where David was beginning, by his sighs, to give symptoms of returning consciousness; and then commending the wounded man to their attention, he immediately prepared to leave them.

“Duncan!” said the tremulous voice of Cora, when he had reached the mouth of the cavern. He turned, and beheld the speaker, whose color had changed to a deadly paleness, and whose lip quivered, gazing after him, with an expression of interest which immediately recalled him to her side. “Remember, Duncan, how necessary your safety is to our own — how you bear a father’s sacred trust — how much depends on your discretion and care — in short,” she added, while the tell-tale blood stole over her features, crimsoning her very temples, “how very deservedly dear you are to all of the name of Munro.”

“If anything could add to my own base love of life,” said Heyward, suffering his unconscious eyes to wander to the youthful form of the silent Alice, “it would be so kind an assurance. As major of the 60th, our honest host will tell you I must take my share of the fray; but our task will be easy; it is merely to keep these blood-hounds at bay for a few hours.”

Without waiting for reply, he tore himself from the presence of the sisters, and joined the scout and his companions, who still lay within the protection of the little chasm between the two caves.

“I tell you, Uncas,” said the former, as Heyward joined them, “you are wasteful of your powder, and the kick of the rifle disconcerts your aim! Little powder, light lead, and a long arm, seldom fail of bringing the death screech from a Mingo! At least, such has been my experience with the creatur’s. Come, friends; let us to our covers, for no man can tell when or where a Maqua<sup>15</sup> will strike his blow.”

<sup>15</sup> Mingo was the Delaware term for the Five Nations. Maquas was the name given them by the Dutch. The French, from their first intercourse with them, called them Iroquois.

The Indians silently repaired to their appointed stations, which were fissures in the rocks, whence they could command the approaches to the foot of the falls. In the centre of the little island, a few short and stunted pines had found root, forming a thicket, into which Hawkeye darted with the swiftness of a deer, followed by the active Duncan. Here they secured themselves, as well as circumstances would permit, among the shrubs and fragments of stone that were scattered about the place. Above them was a bare, rounded rock, on each side of which the water played its gambols, and plunged into the abysses beneath, in the manner already described. As the day had now dawned, the opposite shores no longer presented a confused outline, but they were able to look into the woods, and distinguish objects beneath the canopy of gloomy pines.

A long and anxious watch succeeded, but without any further evidences of a renewed attack; and Duncan began to hope that their fire had proved more fatal than was supposed, and that their enemies had been effectually repulsed. When he ventured to utter this impression to his companion, it was met by Hawkeye with an incredulous shake of the head.

“You know not the nature of a Maqua, if you think he is so easily beaten back without a scalp!” he answered. “If there was one of the imps yelling this morning, there were forty! and they know our number and quality too well to give up the chase so soon. Hist! look into the water above, just where it breaks over the rocks. I am no mortal, if the risky devils haven’t swam down upon the very pitch, and, as bad luck would have it, they have hit the head of the island. Hist! man, keep close! or the hair will be off your crown in the turning of a knife!”

Heyward lifted his head from the cover, and beheld what he justly considered a prodigy of rashness and skill. The river had worn away the edge of the soft rock in such a manner, as to render its first pitch less abrupt and perpendicular than is usual at waterfalls. With no other guide than the ripple of the stream where it met the head of the island, a party of their insatiable foes had ventured into the current, and swam down upon this point, knowing the ready access it would give, if successful, to their intended victims. As Hawkeye ceased speaking, four human heads could be seen peering above a few logs of drift-wood that had lodged on these naked rocks, and which had probably suggested the idea of the practicability of the hazardous undertaking. At the next moment, a fifth form was seen floating over the green edge of the fall, a little from the line of the island. The savage struggled powerfully to gain the point of safety, and, favored by the glancing water, he was already stretching forth an arm to meet the grasp of his companions, when he shot away again with the whirling current, appeared to rise into the air, with uplifted arms and starting eyeballs, and fell, with a sullen plunge, into that deep and yawning abyss over which he hovered. A single, wild, despairing shriek rose from the cavern, and all was hushed again, as the grave.

The first generous impulse of Duncan was to rush to the rescue of the hapless wretch; but he felt himself bound to the spot by the iron grasp of the immovable scout.

“Would ye bring certain death upon us, by telling the Mingos where we lie?” demanded Hawkeye, sternly; “’tis a



charge of powder saved, and ammunition is as precious now as breath to a worried deer! Freshen the priming of your pistols — the mist of the falls is apt to dampen the brimstone — and stand firm for a close struggle, while I fire on their rush.”

He placed his finger in his mouth, and drew a long, shrill whistle, which was answered from the rocks that were guarded by the Mohicans. Duncan caught glimpses of heads above the scattered drift-wood, as this signal rose on the air, but they disappeared again as suddenly as they had glanced upon his sight. A low, rustling sound next drew his attention behind him, and turning his head, he beheld Uncas within a few feet, creeping to his side. Hawkeye spoke to him in Delaware, when the young chief took his position with singular caution and undisturbed coolness. To Heyward this was a moment of feverish and impatient suspense; though the scout saw fit to select it as a fit occasion to read a lecture to his more youthful associates on the art of using fire-arms with discretion.

“Of all we’pons,” he commenced, “the long-barrelled, true-grooved, soft-metalled rifle is the most dangerous in skilful hands, though it wants a strong arm, a quick eye, and great judgment in charging, to put forth all its beauties. The gunsmiths can have but little insight into their trade, when they make their fowling-pieces and short horsemen’s —”

He was interrupted by the low but expressive “Hugh!” of Uncas.

“I see them, boy, I see them!” continued Hawkeye; “they are gathering for the rush, or they would keep their dingy backs below the logs. Well, let them,” he added, examining his flint; “the leading man certainly comes on to his death, though it should be Montcalm himself!”

At that moment the woods were filled with another burst of cries, and at the signal four savages sprang from the cover of the drift-wood. Heyward felt a burning desire to rush forward to meet them, so intense was the delirious anxiety of the moment; but he was restrained by the deliberate examples of the scout and Uncas. When their foes who leaped over the black rock that divided them, with long bounds, uttering the wildest yells, were within a few rods, the rifle of Hawkeye slowly rose among the shrubs, and poured out its fatal contents. The foremost Indian bounded like a stricken deer, and fell headlong among the clefts of the island.

“Now, Uncas!” cried the scout, drawing his long knife, while his quick eyes began to flash with ardor, “take the last of the screeching imps; of the other two we are sartain!”

He was obeyed; and but two enemies remained to be overcome. Heyward had given one of his pistols to Hawkeye, and together they rushed down a little declivity towards their foes; they discharged their weapons at the same instant, and equally without success.

“I know’d it! and I said it!” muttered the scout, whirling the despised little implement over the falls with bitter disdain.

“Come on, ye bloody minded hell-hounds! ye meet a man without a cross!”

The words were barely uttered, when he encountered a savage of gigantic stature, and of the fiercest mien. At the same moment, Duncan found himself engaged with the other, in a similar contest of hand to hand. With ready skill, Hawkeye and his antagonist each grasped that uplifted arm of the other which held the dangerous knife. For near a minute they stood looking one another in the eye, and gradually exerting the power of their muscles for the mastery. At length, the toughened sinews of the white man prevailed over the less practised limbs of the native. The arm of the latter slowly gave way before the increasing force of the scout, who suddenly wresting his armed hand from the grasp of the foe, drove the sharp weapon through his naked bosom to the heart. In the meantime Heyward had been pressed in a more deadly struggle. His slight sword was snapped in the first encounter. As he was destitute of any other means of defence, his safety now depended entirely on bodily strength and resolution. Though deficient in neither of these qualities, he had met an enemy every way his equal. Happily, he soon succeeded in disarming his adversary, whose knife fell on the rock at their feet; and from this moment it became a fierce struggle, who should cast the other over the dizzy height into a neighboring cavern of the falls. Every successive struggle brought them nearer to the verge, where Duncan perceived the final and conquering effort must be made. Each of the combatants threw all his energies into that effort, and the result was, that both tottered on the brink of the precipice. Heyward felt the grasp of the other at his throat, and saw the grim smile the savage gave, under the revengeful hope that he hurried his enemy to a fate similar to his own, as he felt his body slowly yielding to a resistless power, and the young man experienced the passing agony of such a moment in all its horrors. At that instant of extreme danger, a dark hand and glancing knife appeared before him; the Indian released his hold, as the blood flowed freely from around the several tendons of the wrist; and while Duncan was drawn backward by the saving arm of Uncas, his charmed eyes were still riveted on the fierce and disappointed countenance of his foe, who fell sullenly and disappointed down the irrecoverable precipice. “To cover! to cover!” cried Hawkeye, who just then had despatched the enemy; “to cover, for your lives! the work is but half ended!” The young Mohican gave a shout of triumph, and, followed by Duncan, he glided up the acclivity they had descended to the combat, and sought the friendly shelter of the rocks and shrubs.

## CHAPTER 8.

*"They linger yet,  
Avengers of their native land."*

—GRAY.

The warning call of the scout was not uttered without occasion. During the occurrence of the deadly encounter just related, the roar of the falls was unbroken by any human sound whatever. It would seem that interest in the result had kept the natives on the opposite shores in breathless suspense, while the quick evolutions and swift changes in the position of the combatants, effectually prevented a fire that might prove dangerous alike to friend and enemy. But the moment the struggle was decided, a yell arose as fierce and savage as wild and revengful passions could throw into the air. It was followed by the swift flashes of the rifles, which sent their leaden messengers across the rock in volleys, as though the assailants would pour out their impotent fury on the insensible scene of the fatal contest.

A steady, though deliberate return was made from the rifle of Chingachgook, who had maintained his post throughout the fray with unmoved resolution. When the triumphant shout of Uncas was borne to his ears, the gratified father raised his voice in a single responsive cry, after which his busy piece alone proved that he still guarded his pass with unwearied diligence. In this manner many minutes flew by with the swiftness of thought: the rifles of the assailants speaking, at times, in rattling volleys, and at others, in occasional, scattering shots. Though the rock, the trees, and the shrubs, were cut and torn in a hundred places around the besieged, their cover was so close, and so rigidly maintained, that, as yet, David had been the only sufferer in their little band.

"Let them burn their powder," said the deliberate scout, while bullet after bullet whizzed by the place where he securely lay; "there will be a fine gathering of lead when it is over, and I fancy the imps will tire of the sport, afore these old stones cry out for mercy! Uncas, boy, you waste the kernels by overcharging; and a kicking rifle never carries a true bullet. I told you to take that loping miscreant under the line of white paint; now, if your bullet went a hair's breadth, it went two inches above it. The life lies low in a Mingo, and humanity teaches us to make a quick end of the serpents."

A quiet smile lighted the haughty features of the young Mohican, betraying his knowledge of the English language, as well as of the other's meaning; but he suffered it to pass away without vindication or reply.

"I cannot permit you to accuse Uncas of want of judgment or of skill," said Duncan; "he saved my life in the coolest and readiest manner, and he has made a friend who never will require to be reminded of the debt he owes."

Uncas partly raised his body, and offered his hand to the grasp of Heyward. During this act of friendship, the two young men exchanged looks of intelligence which caused Duncan to forget the character and condition of his wild associate. In the meanwhile, Hawkeye, who looked on this burst of youthful feeling with a cool but kind regard, made the following reply:—

"Life is an obligation which friends often owe each other in the wilderness. I dare say I may have served Uncas some such turn myself before now; and I very well remember that he has stood between me and death five different times: three times from the Mingos, once in crossing Horican, and —"

"That bullet was better aimed than common!" exclaimed Duncan, involuntarily shrinking from a shot which struck the rock at his side with a smart rebound.

Hawkeye laid his hand on the shapeless metal, and shook his head, as he examined it, saying, "Falling lead is never flattened! had it come from the clouds this might have happened!"

But the rifle of Uncas was deliberately raised towards the heavens, directing his companions to a point, where the mystery was immediately explained. A ragged oak grew on the right bank of the river, nearly opposite to their position, which, seeking the freedom of the open space, had inclined so far forward, that its upper branches overhung that arm of the stream which flowed nearest to its own shore. Among the topmost leaves, which scantily concealed the gnarled and stunted limbs, a savage was nestled, partly concealed by the trunk of the tree, and partly exposed, as though looking down upon them to ascertain the effect produced by his treacherous aim.

"These devils will scale heaven to circumvent us to our ruin," said Hawkeye; "keep him in play, boy, until I can bring 'Killdeer' to bear, when we will try his metal on each side of the tree at once."

Uncas delayed his fire until the scout uttered the word. The rifles flashed, the leaves and the bark of the oak flew into the air, and were scattered by the wind, but the Indian answered their assault by a taunting laugh, sending down upon them another bullet in return, that struck the cap of Hawkeye from his head. Once more the savage yells burst out of the woods, and the leaden hail whistled above the heads of the besieged, as if to confine them to a place where they might become easy victims to the enterprise of the warrior who had mounted the tree.

"This must be looked to!" said the scout, glancing about him with an anxious eye. "Uncas, call up your father; we have need of all our weapons to bring the cunning varmint from his roost."

The signal was instantly given; and, before Hawkeye had reloaded his rifle, they were joined by Chingachgook. When his son pointed out to the experienced warrior the situation of their dangerous enemy, the usual exclamatory "Hugh!" burst from his lips; after which, no further expression of surprise or alarm was suffered to escape him. Hawkeye and the Mohicans conversed earnestly together in Delaware for a few moments, when each quietly took his post, in order to execute the plan they had speedily devised.

The warrior in the oak had maintained a quick, though ineffectual fire, from the moment of his discovery. But his aim was interrupted by the vigilance of his enemies, whose rifles instantaneously bore on any part of his person that was left exposed. Still his bullets fell in the centre of the crouching party. The clothes of Heyward, which rendered him peculiarly conspicuous, were repeatedly cut, and once blood was drawn from a slight wound in his arm.

At length, emboldened by the long and patient watchfulness of his enemies, the Huron attempted a better and more fatal aim. The quick eye of the Mohicans caught the dark line of his lower limbs incautiously exposed through the thin foliage, a few inches from the trunk of the tree. Their rifles made a common report, when, sinking on his wounded limb, part of the body of the savage came into view. Swift as thought, Hawkeye seized the advantage and discharged his fatal weapon into the top of the oak. The leaves were unusually agitated; the dangerous rifle fell from its commanding elevation, and after a few moments of vain struggling, the form of the savage was seen swinging in the wind, while he still grasped a ragged and naked branch of the tree, with hands clenched in desperation.

"Give him, in pity give him — the contents of another rifle!" cried Duncan, turning away his eyes in horror from the spectacle of a fellow-creature in such awful jeopardy.

"Not a karnel!" exclaimed the obdurate Hawkeye; "his death is certain, and we have no powder to spare, for Indian fights sometimes last for days; 'tis their scalps or ours! — and God, who made us, has put into our natures the craving to keep the skin on the head!"

Against this stern and unyielding morality, supported as it was by such visible policy, there was no appeal. From that moment the yells in the forest once more ceased, the fire was suffered to decline, and all eyes, those of friends as well as enemies, became fixed on the hopeless condition of the wretch who was dangling between heaven and earth. The body yielded to the currents of air, and though no murmur or groan escaped the victim, there were instants when he grimly faced his foes, and the anguish of cold despair might be traced, through the intervening distance, in possession of his swarthy lineaments. Three several times the scout raised his piece in mercy, and as often prudence getting the better of his intention, it was again silently lowered. At length one hand of the Huron lost its hold, and dropped exhausted to his side. A desperate and fruitless struggle to recover the branch succeeded, and then the savage was seen for a fleeting instant, grasping wildly at the empty air. The lightning is not quicker than was the flame from the rifle of Hawkeye; the limbs of the victim trembled and contracted, the head fell to the bosom, and the body parted the foaming waters like lead, when the element closed above it, in its ceaseless velocity, and every vestige of the unhappy Huron was lost forever.

No shout of triumph succeeded this important advantage, but even the Mohicans gazed at each other in silent horror. A single yell burst from the woods, and all was again still. Hawkeye, who alone appeared to reason on the occasion, shook his head at his own momentary weakness, even uttering his self-disapprobation aloud.

"'Twas the last charge in my horn, and the last bullet in my pouch, and 'twas the act of a boy!" he said; "what mattered it whether he struck the rock living or dead: feeling would soon be over. Uncas, lad, go down to the canoe, and bring up the big horn; it is all the powder we have left, and we shall need it to the last grain, or I am ignorant of the Mingo nature."

The young Mohican complied, leaving the scout turning over the useless contents of his pouch, and shaking the empty horn with renewed discontent. From this unsatisfactory examination, however, he was soon called by a loud and piercing exclamation from Uncas, that sounded, even to the unpractised ears of Duncan, as the signal of some new and unexpected

calamity. Every thought filled with apprehension for the precious treasure he had concealed in the cavern, the young man started to his feet, totally regardless of the hazard he incurred by such an exposure. As if actuated by a common impulse, his movement was imitated by his companions, and, together, they rushed down the pass to the friendly chasm, with a rapidity that rendered the scattering fire of their enemies perfectly harmless. The unwonted cry had brought the sisters, together with the wounded David, from their place of refuge; and the whole party, at a single glance, was made acquainted with the nature of the disaster that had disturbed even the practised stoicism of their youthful Indian protector.

At a short distance from the rock, their little bark was to be seen floating across the eddy, towards the swift current of the river, in a manner which proved that its course was directed by some hidden agent. The instant this unwelcome sight caught the eye of the scout, his rifle was levelled as by instinct, but the barrel gave no answer to the bright sparks of the flint.

"'Tis too late, 'tis too late!" Hawkeye exclaimed, dropping the useless piece in bitter disappointment; "the miscreant has struck the rapid; and had we powder, it could hardly send the lead swifter than he now goes!"

The adventurous Huron raised his head above the shelter of the canoe, and while it glided swiftly down the stream, he waved his hand, and gave forth the shout, which was the known signal of success. His cry was answered by a yell and a laugh from the woods, as tauntingly exulting as if fifty demons were uttering their blasphemies at the fall of some Christian soul.

"Well may you laugh, ye children of the devil!" said the scout, seating himself on a projection of the rock, and suffering his gun to fall neglected at his feet, "for the three quickest and surest rifles in these woods are no better than so many stalks of mullein, or the last year's horns of a buck!"

"What is to be done?" demanded Duncan, losing the first feeling of disappointment in a more manly desire for exertion; "what will become of us?"

Hawkeye made no other reply than by passing his finger around the crown of his head, in a manner so significant, that none who witnessed the action could mistake its meaning.

"Surely, surely, our case is not so desperate!" exclaimed the youth; "the Hurons are not here; we may make good the caverns; we may oppose their landing."

"With what?" coolly demanded the scout. "The arrows of Uncas, or such tears as women shed! No, no; you are young, and rich, and have friends, and at such an age I know it is hard to die! But," glancing his eyes at the Mohicans, "let us remember we are men without a cross, and let us teach these natives of the forest that white blood can run as freely as red, when the appointed hour is come."

Duncan turned quickly in the direction indicated by the other's eyes, and read a confirmation of his worst apprehensions in the conduct of the Indians. Chingachgook, placing himself in a dignified posture on another fragment of the rock, had already laid aside his knife and tomahawk, and was in the act of taking the eagle's plume from his head, and smoothing the solitary tuft of hair in readiness to perform its last and revolting office. His countenance was composed, though thoughtful, while his dark gleaming eyes were gradually losing the fierceness of the combat in an expression better suited to the change he expected momentarily to undergo.

"Our case is not, cannot be so hopeless!" said Duncan; "even at this moment succor may be at hand. I see no enemies! they have sickened of a struggle in which they risk so much with so little prospect of gain!"

"It may be a minute, or it may be an hour, afore the wily serpents steal upon us, and it is quite in natur' for them to be lying within hearing at this very moment," said Hawkeye; "but come they will, and in such a fashion as will leave us nothing to hope! Chingachgook"— he spoke in Delaware —"my brother, we have fought our last battle together, and the Maquas will triumph in the death of the sage man of the Mohicans, and of the pale-face, whose eyes can make night as day, and level the clouds to the mists of the springs!"

"Let the Mingo women go weep over their slain!" returned the Indian, with characteristic pride and unmoved firmness; "the Great Snake of the Mohicans has coiled himself in their wigwams, and has poisoned their triumph with the wailings of children whose fathers have not returned! Eleven warriors lie hid from the graves of their tribes since the snows have melted, and none will tell where to find them when the tongue of Chingachgook shall be silent! Let them draw the sharpest knife, and whirl the swiftest tomahawk, for their bitterest enemy is in their hands. Uncas, topmost branch of a noble trunk, call on the cowards to hasten or their hearts will soften, and they will change to women!"

"They look among the fishes for their dead!" returned the low, soft voice of the youthful chieftain; "the Hurons float with the slimy eels! They drop from the oaks like fruit that is ready to be eaten! and the Delawares laugh!"

"Ay, ay," muttered the scout, who had listened to this peculiar burst of the natives with deep attention; "they have warmed their Indian feelings, and they'll soon provoke the Maquas to give them a speedy end. As for me, who am of the whole blood of the whites, it is befitting that I should die as becomes my color, with no words of scoffing in my mouth, and without bitterness at the heart!"

"Why die at all!" said Cora, advancing from the place where natural horror had, until this moment, held her riveted to the rock; "the path is open on every side; fly, then, to the woods, and call on God for succor. Go, brave men, we owe you too much already; let us no longer involve you in our hapless fortunes!"

"You but little know the craft of the Iroquois, lady, if you judge they have left the path open to the woods!" returned Hawkeye, who, however, immediately added in his simplicity, "the down stream current, it is certain, might soon sweep us beyond the reach of their rifles or the sounds of their voices."

"Then try the river. Why linger to add to the number of the victims of our merciless enemies?"

"Why," repeated the scout, looking about him proudly, "because it is better for a man to die at peace with himself than to live haunted by an evil conscience! What answer could we give Munro, when he asked us where and how we left his children?"

"Go to him, and say, that you left them with a message to hasten to their aid," returned Cora, advancing nigher to the scout, in her generous ardor; "that the Hurons bear them into the northern wilds, but that by vigilance and speed they may yet be rescued; and if, after all, it should please heaven that his assistance come too late, bear to him," she continued, her voice gradually lowering, until it seemed nearly choked, "the love, the blessings, the final prayers of his daughters, and bid him not mourn their early fate, but to look forward with humble confidence to the Christian's goal to meet his children."

The hard, weather-beaten features of the scout began to work, and when she had ended, he dropped his chin to his hand, like a man musing profoundly on the nature of the proposal.

"There is reason in her words!" at length broke from his compressed and trembling lips; "ay, and they bear the spirit of Christianity; what might be right and proper in a redskin, may be sinful in a man who has not even a cross in blood to plead for his ignorance. Chingachgook! Uncas! hear you the talk of the dark-eyed woman!"

He now spoke in Delaware to his companions, and his address, though calm and deliberate, seemed very decided. The elder Mohican heard him with deep gravity, and appeared to ponder on his words, as though he felt the importance of their import. After a moment of hesitation, he waved his hand in assent, and uttered the English word "Good!" with the peculiar emphasis of his people. Then, replacing his knife and tomahawk in his girdle, the warrior moved silently to the edge of the rock which was most concealed from the banks of the river. Here he paused a moment, pointed significantly to the woods below, and saying a few words in his own language, as if indicating his intended route, he dropped into the water, and sank from before the eyes of the witnesses of his movements.

The scout delayed his departure to speak to the generous girl, whose breathing became lighter as she saw the success of her remonstrance.

"Wisdom is sometimes given to the young, as well as to the old," he said; "and what you have spoken is wise, not to call it by a better word. If you are led into the woods, that is such of you as may be spared for a while, break the twigs on the bushes as you pass, and make the marks of your trail as broad as you can, when, if mortal eyes can see them, depend on having a friend who will follow to the ends of 'arth afore he desarts you."

He gave Cora an affectionate shake of the hand, lifted his rifle, and after regarding it a moment with melancholy solicitude, laid it carefully aside, and descended to the place where Chingachgook had just disappeared. For an instant he hung suspended by the rock; and looking about him, with a countenance of peculiar care, he added, bitterly, "Had the powder held out, this disgrace could never have befallen!" then, loosening his hold, the water closed above his head, and he also became lost to view.

All eyes were now turned on Uncas, who stood leaning against the ragged rock, in immovable composure. After waiting a short time, Cora pointed down the river, and said:—

"Your friends have not been seen, and are now, most probably, in safety; is it not time for you to follow?"

"Uncas will stay," the young Mohican calmly answered in English.

"To increase the horror of our capture, and to diminish the chances of our release! Go, generous young man," Cora continued, lowering her eyes under the gaze of the Mohican, and, perhaps, with an intuitive consciousness of her power; "go to my father, as I have said, and be the most confidential of my messengers. Tell him to trust you with the means to buy the freedom of his daughters. Go! 'tis my wish, 'tis my prayer, that you will go!"

The settled, calm look of the young chief changed to an expression of gloom, but he no longer hesitated. With a noiseless step he crossed the rock, and dropped into the troubled stream. Hardly a breath was drawn by those he left behind, until they caught a glimpse of his head emerging for air, far down the current, when he again sank, and was seen no more.

These sudden and apparently successful experiments had all taken place in a few minutes of that time which had now become so precious. After the last look at Uncas, Cora turned, and, with a quivering lip, addressed herself to Heyward:—

"I have heard of your boasted skill in the water, too, Duncan," she said; "follow, then, the wise example set you by these simple and faithful beings."

"Is such the faith that Cora Munro would exact from her protector?" said the young man, smiling mournfully, but with bitterness.

"This is not a time for idle subtleties and false opinions," she answered; "but a moment when every duty should be equally considered. To us you can be of no further service here, but your precious life may be saved for other and nearer friends."

He made no reply, though his eyes fell wistfully on the beautiful form of Alice, who was clinging to his arm with the dependency of an infant.

"Consider," continued Cora, after a pause, during which she seemed to struggle with a pang even more acute than any that her fears had excited, "that the worst to us can be but death; a tribute that all must pay at the good time of God's appointment."

"There are evils worse than death," said Duncan, speaking hoarsely, and as if fretful at her importunity, "but which the presence of one who would die in your behalf may avert."

Cora ceased her entreaties; and, veiling her face in her shawl, drew the nearly insensible Alice after her into the deepest recess of the inner cavern.



## CHAPTER 9.

*"Be gay securely;  
Dispel, my fair, with smiles, the tim'rous clouds,  
That hang on thy clear brow."*

—DEATH OF AGRIPPINA.

The sudden and almost magical change, from the stirring incidents of the combat to the stillness that now reigned around him, acted on the heated imagination of Heyward like some exciting dream. While all the images and events he had witnessed remained deeply impressed on his memory, he felt a difficulty in persuading himself of their truth. Still ignorant of the fate of those who had trusted to the aid of the swift current, he at first listened intently to any signal, or sounds of alarm, which might announce the good or evil fortune of their hazardous undertaking. His attention was, however, bestowed in vain; for, with the disappearance of Uncas, every sign of the adventurers had been lost, leaving him in total uncertainty of their fate.

In a moment of such painful doubt, Duncan did not hesitate to look about him, without consulting that protection from the rocks which just before had been so necessary to his safety. Every effort, however, to detect the least evidence of the approach of their hidden enemies, was as fruitless as the inquiry after his late companions. The wooded banks of the rivers seemed again deserted by everything possessing animal life. The uproar which had so lately echoed through the vaults of the forest was gone, leaving the rush of the waters to swell and sink on the currents of the air, in the unmingled sweetness of nature. A fish-hawk, which, secure on the topmost branches of a dead pine, had been a distant spectator of the fray, now stooped from his high and ragged perch, and soared, in wide sweeps, above his prey; while a jay, whose noisy voice had been stilled by the hoarser cries of the savages, ventured again to open his discordant throat, as though once more in undisturbed possession of his wild domains. Duncan caught from these natural accompaniments of the solitary scene a glimmering of hope; and he began to rally his faculties to renewed exertions, with something like a reviving confidence of success.

"The Hurons are not to be seen," he said, addressing David, who had by no means recovered from the effects of the stunning blow he had received; "let us conceal ourselves in the cavern, and trust the rest to Providence."

"I remember to have united with two comely maidens, in lifting up our voices in praise and thanksgiving," returned the bewildered singing-master; "since which time I have been visited by a heavy judgment for my sins. I have been mocked with the likeness of sleep, while sounds of discord have rent my ears, such as might manifest the fulness of time, and that nature had forgotten her harmony."

"Poor fellow! thine own period was, in truth, near its accomplishment! But arouse, and come with me; I will lead you where all other sounds but those of your own psalmody shall be excluded."

"There is melody in the fall of the cataract, and the rushing of many waters is sweet to the senses!" said David, pressing his hand confusedly on his brow. "Is not the air yet filled with shrieks and cries, as though the departed spirits of the damned —"

"Not now, not now," interrupted the impatient Heyward, "they have ceased, and they who raised them, I trust in God, they are gone too! everything but the water is still and at peace; in, then, where you may create those sounds you love so well to hear."

David smiled sadly, though not without a momentary gleam of pleasure, at this allusion to his beloved vocation. He no longer hesitated to be led to a spot which promised such unalloyed gratification to his wearied senses; and, leaning on the arm of his companion, he entered the narrow mouth of the cave. Duncan seized a pile of the sassafras, which he drew before the passage, studiously concealing every appearance of an aperture. Within this fragile barrier he arranged the blankets abandoned by the foresters, darkening the inner extremity of the cavern, while its outer received a chastened light from the narrow ravine, through which one arm of the river rushed, to form the junction with its sister branch, a few rods below.

"I like not that principle of the natives, which teaches them to submit without a struggle, in emergencies that appear desperate," he said, while busied in this employment; "our own maxim, which says, 'while life remains there is hope,' is

more consoling, and better suited to a soldier's temperament. To you, Cora, I will urge no words of idle encouragement; your own fortitude and undisturbed reason will teach you all that may become your sex; but cannot we dry the tears of that trembling weeper on your bosom?"

"I am calmer, Duncan," said Alice, raising herself from the arms of her sister, and forcing an appearance of composure through her tears; "much calmer, now. Surely, in this hidden spot we are safe, we are secret, free from injury; we will hope everything from those generous men who have risked so much already in our behalf."

"Now does our gentle Alice speak like a daughter of Munro!" said Heyward, pausing to press her hand as he passed towards the outer entrance of the cavern. "With two such examples of courage before him, a man would be ashamed to prove other than a hero." He then seated himself in the centre of the cavern, grasping his remaining pistol with a hand convulsively clenched, while his contracted and frowning eye announced the sullen desperation of his purpose. "The Hurons, if they come, may not gain our position so easily as they think," he lowly muttered; and dropping his head back against the rock, he seemed to await the result in patience, though his gaze was unceasingly bent on the open avenue to their place of retreat.

With the last sound of his voice, a deep, a long, and almost breathless silence succeeded. The fresh air of the morning had penetrated the recess, and its influence was gradually felt on the spirits of its inmates. As minute after minute passed by, leaving them in undisturbed security, the insinuating feeling of hope was gradually gaining possession of every bosom, though each one felt reluctant to give utterance to expectations that the next moment might so fearfully destroy.

David alone formed an exception to these varying emotions. A gleam of light from the opening crossed his wan countenance, and fell upon the pages of the little volume, whose leaves he was again occupied in turning, as if searching for some song more fitted to their condition than any that had yet met his eye. He was, most probably, acting all this time under a confused recollection of the promised consolation of Duncan. At length, it would seem, his patient industry found its reward; for, without explanation or apology, he pronounced aloud the words "Isle of Wight," drew a long, sweet sound from his pitch-pipe, and then ran through the preliminary modulations of the air, whose name he had just mentioned with the sweeter tones of his own musical voice.

"May not this prove dangerous?" asked Cora, glancing her dark eye at Major Heyward.

"Poor fellow! his voice is too feeble to be heard amid the din of the falls," was the answer; "besides, the cavern will prove his friend. Let him indulge his passion, since it may be done without hazard."

"Isle of Wight!" repeated David, looking about him with that dignity with which he had long been wont to silence the whispering echoes of his school; "'tis a brave tune, and set to solemn words; let it be sung with meet respect!"

After allowing a moment of stillness, to enforce his discipline, the voice of the singer was heard, in low, murmuring syllables, gradually stealing on the ear, until it filled the narrow vault with sounds rendered trebly thrilling by the feeble and tremulous utterance produced by his debility. The melody, which no weakness could destroy, gradually wrought its sweet influence on the senses of those who heard it. It even prevailed over the miserable travesty of the song of David which the singer had selected from a volume of similar effusions, and caused the sense to be forgotten in the insinuating harmony of the sounds. Alice unconsciously dried her tears, and bent her melting eyes on the pallid features of Gamut with an expression of chastened delight that she neither affected nor wished to conceal. Cora bestowed an approving smile on the pious efforts of the namesake of the Jewish prince, and Heyward soon turned his steady, stern look from the outlet of the cavern, to fasten it, with a milder character, on the face of David, or to meet the wandering beams which at moments strayed from the humid eyes of Alice. The open sympathy of the listeners stirred the spirit of the votary of music, whose voice regained its richness and volume, without losing that touching softness which proved its secret charm. Exerting his renovated powers to their utmost, he was yet filling the arches of the cave with long and full tones, when a yell burst into the air without, that instantly stilled his pious strains, choking his voice suddenly, as though his heart had literally bounded into the passage of his throat.

"We are lost!" exclaimed Alice, throwing herself into the arms of Cora.

"Not yet, not yet," returned the agitated but undaunted Heyward; "the sound came from the centre of the island, and it has been produced by the sight of their dead companions. We are not yet discovered, and there is still hope."

Faint and almost despairing as was the prospect of escape, the words of Duncan were not thrown away, for it awakened the powers of the sisters in such a manner that they awaited the result in silence. A second yell soon followed the



first, when a rush of voices was heard pouring down the island, from its upper to its lower extremity, until they reached the naked rock above the caverns, where, after a shout of savage triumph, the air continued full of horrible cries and screams, such as man alone can utter, and he only when in a state of the fiercest barbarity.

The sounds quickly spread around them in every direction. Some called to their fellows from the water's edge, and were answered from the heights above. Cries were heard in the startling vicinity of the chasm between the two caves, which mingled with hoarser yells that arose out of the abyss of the deep ravine. In short, so rapidly had the savage sounds diffused themselves over the barren rock, that it was not difficult for the anxious listeners to imagine they could be heard beneath, as in truth they were above and on every side of them.

In the midst of this tumult, a triumphant yell was raised within a few yards of the hidden entrance to the cave. Heyward abandoned every hope, with the belief it was the signal that they were discovered. Again the impression passed away, as he heard the voices collect near the spot where the white man had so reluctantly abandoned his rifle. Amid the jargon of the Indian dialects that he now plainly heard, it was easy to distinguish not only words, but sentences, in the *patois* of the Canadas. A burst of voices had shouted simultaneously, "La Longue Carabine!" causing the opposite woods to re-echo with a name which, Heyward well remembered, had been given by his enemies to a celebrated hunter and scout of the English camp, and who, he now learnt for the first time, had been his late companion.

"La Longue Carabine! La Longue Carabine!" passed from mouth to mouth, until the whole band appeared to be collected around a trophy which would seem to announce the death of its formidable owner. After a vociferous consultation, which was, at times, deafened by bursts of savage joy, they again separated, filling the air with the name of a foe, whose body, Heyward could collect from their expressions, they hoped to find concealed in some crevice of the island.

"Now," he whispered to the trembling sisters, "now is the moment of uncertainty! if our place of retreat escape this scrutiny, we are still safe! In every event, we are assured, by what has fallen from our enemies, that our friends have escaped, and in two short hours we may look for succor from Webb."

There were now a few minutes of fearful stillness, during which Heyward well knew that the savages conducted their search with greater vigilance and method. More than once he could distinguish their footsteps, as they brushed the sassafras, causing the faded leaves to rustle, and the branches to snap. At length, the pile yielded a little, a corner of the blanket fell, and a faint ray of light gleamed into the inner part of the cave. Cora folded Alice to her bosom in agony, and Duncan sprang to his feet. A shout was at that moment heard, as if issuing from the centre of the rock, announcing that the neighboring cavern had at length been entered. In a minute, the number and loudness of the voices indicated that the whole party was collected in and around that secret place.

As the inner passages to the two caves were so close to each other, Duncan, believing that escape was no longer possible, passed David and the sisters, to place himself between the latter and the first onset of the terrible meeting. Grown desperate by his situation, he drew nigh the slight barrier which separated him only by a few feet from his relentless pursuers, and placing his face to the casual opening, he even looked out, with a sort of desperate indifference, on their movements.

Within reach of his arm was the brawny shoulder of a gigantic Indian, whose deep and authoritative voice appeared to give directions to the proceedings of his fellows. Beyond him again, Duncan could look into the vault opposite, which was filled with savages, upturning and rifling the humble furniture of the scout. The wound of David had dyed the leaves of sassafras with a color that the natives well knew was anticipating the season. Over this sign of their success, they set up a howl, like an opening from so many hounds who had recovered a lost trail. After this yell of victory, they tore up the fragrant bed of the cavern, and bore the branches into the chasm, scattering the boughs, as if they suspected them of concealing the person of the man they had so long hated and feared. One fierce and wild-looking warrior approached the chief bearing a load of the brush, and pointing, exultingly, to the deep red stains with which it was sprinkled, uttered his joy in Indian yells, whose meaning Heyward was only enabled to comprehend by the frequent repetition of the name of "La Longue Carabine!" When his triumph had ceased, he cast the brush on the slight heap that Duncan had made before the entrance of the second cavern, and closed the view. His example was followed by others, who, as they drew the branches from the cave of the scout, threw them into one pile, adding, unconsciously, to the security of those they sought. The very slightness of the defence was its chief merit, for no one thought of disturbing a mass of brush, which all of them believed, in that moment of hurry and confusion, had been accidentally raised by the hands of their own party.

As the blankets yielded before the outward pressure, and the branches settled in the fissure of the rock by their own weight, forming a compact body, Duncan once more breathed freely. With a light step, and lighter heart, he returned to the centre of the cave, and took the place he had left, where he could command a view of the opening next the river. While he was in the act of making this movement, the Indians, as if changing their purpose by a common impulse, broke away from the cavern in a body, and were heard rushing up the island again, towards the point whence they had originally descended. Here another wailing cry betrayed that they were again collected around the bodies of their dead comrades.

Duncan now ventured to look at his companions; for, during the most critical moments of their danger, he had been apprehensive that the anxiety of his countenance might communicate some additional alarm to those who were so little able to sustain it.

"They are gone, Cora!" he whispered; "Alice, they are returned whence they came, and we are saved! To Heaven, that has alone delivered us from the grasp of so merciless an enemy, be all the praise!"

"Then to Heaven will I return my thanks!" exclaimed the younger sister, rising from the encircling arms of Cora, and casting herself with enthusiastic gratitude on the naked rock; "to that Heaven who has spared the tears of a gray-headed father; has saved the lives of those I so much love —"

Both Heyward, and the more tempered Cora, witnessed the act of involuntary emotion with powerful sympathy, the former secretly believing that piety had never worn a form so lovely as it had now assumed in the youthful person of Alice. Her eyes radiant with the glow of grateful feelings; the flush of her beauty was again seated on her cheeks, and her whole soul seemed ready and anxious to pour out its thanksgivings, through the medium of her eloquent features. But when her lips moved, the words they should have uttered appeared frozen by some new and sudden chill. Her bloom gave place to the paleness of death; her soft and melting eyes grew hard, and seemed contracting with horror; while those hands which she had raised, clasped in each other, towards heaven, dropped in horizontal lines before her, the fingers pointed forward in convulsed motion. Heyward turned, the instant she gave a direction to his suspicions, and, peering just above the ledge which formed the threshold of the open outlet of the cavern, he beheld the malignant, fierce, and savage features of Le Renard Subtil.

In that moment of surprise, the self-possession of Heyward did not desert him. He observed by the vacant expression of the Indian's countenance, that his eye, accustomed to the open air, had not yet been able to penetrate the dusky light which pervaded the depth of the cavern. He had even thought of retreating beyond a curvature in the natural wall, which might still conceal him and his companions, when, by the sudden gleam of intelligence that shot across the features of the savage, he saw it was too late, and that they were betrayed.

The look of exultation and brutal triumph which announced this terrible truth was irresistibly irritating. Forgetful of everything but the impulses of his hot blood, Duncan levelled his pistol and fired. The report of the weapon made the cavern bellow like an eruption from a volcano; and when the smoke it vomited had been driven away before the current of air which issued from the ravine, the place so lately occupied by the features of his treacherous guide was vacant. Rushing to the outlet, Heyward caught a glimpse of his dark figure, stealing around a low and narrow ledge, which soon hid him entirely from sight.

Among the savages, a frightful stillness succeeded the explosion, which had just been heard bursting from the bowels of the rock. But when Le Renard raised his voice in a long and intelligible whoop, it was answered by a spontaneous yell from the mouth of every Indian within hearing of the sound. The clamorous noises again rushed down the island; and before Duncan had time to recover from the shock, his feeble barrier of brush was scattered to the winds, the cavern was entered at both its extremities, and he and his companions were dragged from their shelter and borne into the day, where they stood surrounded by the whole band of the triumphant Hurons.



## CHAPTER 10.

*"I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn  
As much as we this night have overwatched!"*

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The instant the shock of this sudden misfortune had abated, Duncan began to make his observations on the appearance and proceedings of their captors. Contrary to the usages of the natives in the wantonness of their success, they had respected, not only the persons of the trembling sisters, but his own. The rich ornaments of his military attire had indeed been repeatedly handled by different individuals of the tribe with eyes expressing a savage longing to possess the baubles; but before the customary violence could be resorted to, a mandate in the authoritative voice of the large warrior already mentioned, stayed the uplifted hand, and convinced Heyward that they were to be reserved for some object of particular moment.

While, however, these manifestations of weakness were exhibited by the young and vain of the party, the more experienced warriors continued their search throughout both caverns, with an activity that denoted they were far from being satisfied with those fruits of their conquest which had already been brought to light. Unable to discover any new victim, these diligent workers of vengeance soon approached their male prisoners, pronouncing the name of "La Longue Carabine," with a fierceness that could not easily be mistaken. Duncan affected not to comprehend the meaning of their repeated and violent interrogatories, while his companion was spared the effort of a similar deception by his ignorance of French. Wearied, at length, by their importunities, and apprehensive of irritating his captors by too stubborn a silence, the former looked about him in quest of Magua; who might interpret his answers to questions which were at each moment becoming more earnest and threatening.

The conduct of this savage had formed a solitary exception to that of all his fellows. While the others were busily occupied in seeking to gratify their childish passion for finery, by plundering even the miserable effects of the scout, or had been searching, with such bloodthirsty vengeance in their looks, for their absent owner, Le Renard had stood at a little distance from the prisoners, with a demeanor so quiet and satisfied, as to betray that he had already effected the grand purpose of this treachery. When the eyes of Heyward first met those of his recent guide, he turned them away in horror at the sinister though calm look he encountered. Conquering his disgust, however, he was able, with an averted face, to address his successful enemy.

"Le Renard Subtil is too much of a warrior," said the reluctant Heyward, "to refuse telling an unarmed man what his conquerors say."

"They ask for the hunter who knows the paths through the woods," returned Magua, in his broken English, laying his hand, at the same time, with a ferocious smile, on the bundle of leaves with which a wound on his own shoulder was bandaged. "La Longue Carabine! his rifle is good, and his eye never shut; but, like the short gun of the white chief, it is nothing against the life of Le Subtil!"

"Le Renard is too brave to remember the hurts received in war, or the hands that gave them!"

"Was it war, when the tired Indian rested at the sugar-tree to taste his corn! who filled the bushes with creeping enemies! who drew the knife! whose tongue was peace, while his heart was colored with blood! Did Magua say that the hatchet was out of the ground, and that his hand had dug it up?"

As Duncan dared not retort upon his accuser by reminding him of his own premeditated treachery, and disdained to deprecate his resentment by any words of apology, he remained silent. Magua seemed also content to rest the controversy as well as all further communication there, for he resumed the leaning attitude against the rock, from which, in momentary energy, he had arisen. But the cry of "La Longue Carabine" was renewed the instant the impatient savages perceived that the short dialogue was ended.

"You hear," said Magua, with stubborn indifference; "the red Hurons call for the life of 'The Long Rifle,' or they will have the blood of them that keep him hid!"

"He is gone — escaped; he is far beyond their reach."

Renard smiled with cold contempt, as he answered —

"When the white man dies, he thinks he is at peace; but the redmen know how to torture even the ghosts of their enemies. Where is his body? Let the Hurons see his scalp!"

"He is not dead, but escaped."

Magua shook his head incredulously.

"Is he a bird, to spread his wings; or is he a fish, to swim without air! The white chief reads in his books, and he believes the Hurons are fools!"

"Though no fish, The Long Rifle can swim. He floated down the stream when the powder was all burnt, and when the eyes of the Hurons were behind a cloud."

"And why did the white chief stay?" demanded the still incredulous Indian. "Is he a stone that goes to the bottom, or does the scalp burn his head?"

"That I am not a stone, your dead comrade, who fell into the falls, might answer, were the life still in him," said the provoked young man, using, in his anger, that boastful language which was most likely to excite the admiration of an Indian. "The white man thinks none but cowards desert their women."

Magua muttered a few words, inaudibly, between his teeth, before he continued, aloud —

"Can the Delawares swim, too, as well as crawl in the bushes? Where is Le Gros Serpent?"

Duncan, who perceived by the use of these Canadian appellations, that his late companions were much better known to his enemies than to himself, answered, reluctantly, "He also is gone down with the water."

"Le Cerf Agile is not here?"

"I know not whom you call 'The Nimble Deer,'" said Duncan, gladly profiting by any excuse to create delay.

"Uncas," returned Magua, pronouncing the Delaware name with even greater difficulty than he spoke his English words. "'Bounding Elk' is what the white man says, when he calls to the young Mohican."

"Here is some confusion in names between us, Le Renard," said Duncan, hoping to provoke a discussion. "*Daim* is the French for deer, and *cerf* for stag; *élan* is the true term, when one would speak of an elk."

"Yes," muttered the Indian, in his native tongue; "the pale-faces are prattling women! they have two words for each thing, while a redskin will make the sound of his voice speak for him." Then changing his language, he continued, adhering to the imperfect nomenclature of his provincial instructors, "The deer is swift, but weak; the elk is swift, but strong; and the son of Le Serpent is Le Cerf Agile. Has he leaped the river to the woods?"

"If you mean the younger Delaware, he too is gone down with the water."

As there was nothing improbable to an Indian in the manner of the escape, Magua admitted the truth of what he had heard, with a readiness that afforded additional evidence how little he would prize such worthless captives. With his companions, however, the feeling was manifestly different.

The Hurons had awaited the result of this short dialogue with characteristic patience, and with a silence that increased until there was a general stillness in the band. When Heyward ceased to speak, they turned their eyes, as one man, on Magua, demanding, in this expressive manner, an explanation of what had been said. Their interpreter pointed to the river, and made them acquainted with the result, as much by the action as by the few words he uttered. When the fact was generally understood, the savages raised a frightful yell, which declared the extent of their disappointment. Some ran furiously to the water's edge, beating the air with frantic gestures, while others spat upon the element, to resent the supposed treason it had committed against their acknowledged rights as conquerors. A few, and they not the least powerful and terrific of the band, threw lowering looks, in which the fiercest passion was only tempered by habitual self-command, at those captives who still remained in their power; while one or two even gave vent to their malignant feelings by the most menacing gestures, against which neither the sex nor the beauty of the sisters was any protection. The young soldier made a desperate, but fruitless effort, to spring to the side of Alice, when he saw the dark hand of a savage twisted in the rich tresses which were flowing in volumes over her shoulders, while a knife was passed around the head from which they fell, as if to denote the horrid manner in which it was about to be robbed of its beautiful ornament. But his hands were bound; and at the first movement he made, he felt the grasp of the powerful Indian who directed the band, pressing his shoulder like a vise. Immediately conscious how unavailing any struggle against such an overwhelming force must prove, he submitted to his fate, encouraging his gentle companions by a few low and tender assurances that the natives seldom failed

to threaten more than they performed.

But, while Duncan resorted to these words of consolation to quiet the apprehensions of the sisters, he was not so weak as to deceive himself. He well knew that the authority of an Indian chief was so little conventional, that it was oftener maintained by physical superiority than by any moral supremacy he might possess. The danger was, therefore, magnified exactly in proportion to the number of the savage spirits by which they were surrounded. The most positive mandate from him who seemed the acknowledged leader, was liable to be violated at each moment, by any rash hand that might choose to sacrifice a victim to the *manes* of some dead friend or relative. While, therefore, he sustained an outward appearance of calmness and fortitude, his heart leaped into his throat, whenever any of their fierce captors drew nearer than common to the helpless sisters, or fastened one of their sullen wandering looks on those fragile forms which were so little able to resist the slightest assault.

His apprehensions were, however, greatly relieved, when he saw that the leader had summoned his warriors to himself in council. Their deliberations were short, and it would seem, by the silence of most of the party, the decision unanimous. By the frequency with which the few speakers pointed in the direction of the encampment of Webb, it was apparent they dreaded the approach of danger from that quarter. This consideration probably hastened their determination, and quickened the subsequent movements.

During this short conference, Heyward, finding a respite from his greatest fears, had leisure to admire the cautious manner in which the Hurons had made their approaches, even after hostilities had ceased.

It has already been stated, that the upper half of the island was a naked rock, and destitute of any other defences than a few scattered logs of drift-wood. They had selected this point to make their descent, having borne the canoe through the wood around the cataract for that purpose. Placing their arms in the little vessel, a dozen men clinging to its sides had trusted themselves to the direction of the canoe, which was controlled by two of the most skilful warriors, in attitudes that enabled them to command a view of the dangerous passage. Favored by this arrangement, they touched the head of the island at that point which had proved so fatal to their first adventures, but with the advantages of superior numbers, and the possession of fire-arms. That such had been the manner of their descent was rendered quite apparent to Duncan; for they now bore the light bark from the upper end of the rock, and placed it in the water, near the mouth of the outer cavern. As soon as this change was made, the leader made signs to the prisoners to descend and enter.

As resistance was impossible, and remonstrance useless, Heyward set the example of submission, by leading the way into the canoe, where he was soon seated with the sisters, and the still wondering David. Notwithstanding the Hurons were necessarily ignorant of the little channels among the eddies and rapids of the stream, they knew the common signs of such a navigation too well to commit any material blunder. When the pilot chosen for the task of guiding the canoe had taken his station, the whole band plunged again into the river, the vessel glided down the current, and in a few moments the captives found themselves on the south bank of the stream, nearly opposite to the point where they had struck it the preceding evening.

Here was held another short but earnest consultation, during which the horses, to whose panic their owners ascribed their heaviest misfortune, were led from the cover of the woods, and brought to the sheltered spot. The band now divided. The great chief so often mentioned, mounting the charger of Heyward, led the way directly across the river, followed by most of his people, and disappeared in the woods, leaving the prisoners in charge of six savages, at whose head was Le Renard Subtil. Duncan witnessed all their movements with renewed uneasiness.

He had been fond of believing, from the uncommon forbearance of the savages, that he was reserved as a prisoner to be delivered to Montcalm. As the thoughts of those who are in misery seldom slumber, and the invention is never more lively than when it is stimulated by hope, however feeble and remote, he had even imagined that the parental feelings of Munro were to be made instrumental in seducing him from his duty to the king. For though the French commander bore a high character for courage and enterprise, he was also thought to be expert in those political practices, which do not always respect the nicer obligations of morality, and which so generally disgraced the European diplomacy of that period.

All those busy and ingenious speculations were now annihilated by the conduct of his captors. That portion of the band who had followed the huge warrior took the route towards the foot of the Horican, and no other expectation was left for himself and companions, than that they were to be retained as hopeless captives by their savage conquerors. Anxious to know the worst, and willing, in such an emergency, to try the potency of gold, he overcame his reluctance to speak to

Magua. Addressing himself to his former guide, who had now assumed the authority and manner of one who was to direct the future movements of the party, he said, in tones as friendly and confiding as he could assume —

“I would speak to Magua, what is fit only for so great a chief to hear.”

The Indian turned his eyes on the young soldier scornfully, as he answered —

“Speak; trees have no ears!”

“But the red Hurons are not deaf; and counsel that is fit for the great men of a nation would make the young warriors drunk. If Magua will not listen, the officer of the king knows how to be silent.”

The savage spoke carelessly to his comrades, who were busied, after their awkward manner, in preparing the horses for the reception of the sisters, and moved a little to one side, whither, by a cautious gesture, he induced Heyward to follow.

“Now speak,” he said; “if the words are such as Magua should hear.”

“Le Renard Subtil has proved himself worthy of the honorable name given to him by his Canada fathers,” commenced Heyward; “I see his wisdom, and all that he has done for us, and shall remember it, when the hour to reward him arrives. Yes! Renard has proved that he is not only a great chief in council, but one who knows how to deceive his enemies!”

“What has Renard done?” coldly demanded the Indian.

“What! has he not seen that the woods were filled with outlying parties of the enemies, and that the Serpent could not steal through them without being seen? Then, did he not lose his path to blind the eyes of the Hurons? Did he not pretend to go back to his tribe, who had treated him ill, and driven him from their wigwams like a dog? And, when we saw what he wished to do, did we not aid him, by making a false face, that the Hurons might think the white man believed that his friend was his enemy? Is not all this true? And when Le Subtil had shut the eyes and stopped the ears of his nation by his wisdom, did they not forget that they had once done him wrong, and forced him to flee to the Mohawks? And did they not leave him on the south side of the river, with their prisoners, while they have gone foolishly on the north? Does not Renard mean to turn like a fox on his footsteps, and to carry to the rich and gray-headed Scotchman his daughters? Yes, Magua, I see it all, and I have already been thinking how so much wisdom and honesty should be repaid. First, the chief of William Henry will give as a great chief should for such a service. The medal<sup>16</sup> of Magua will no longer be of tin, but of beaten gold; his horn will run over with powder; dollars will be as plenty in his pouch as pebbles on the shore of Horican; and the deer will lick his hand, for they will know it to be vain to fly from the rifle he will carry! As for myself, I know not how to exceed the gratitude of the Scotchman, but I— yes, I will —”

<sup>16</sup> It has long been a practice with the whites to conciliate the important men of the Indians, by presenting medals, which are worn in the place of their own rude ornaments. Those given by the English generally bear the impression of the reigning king, and those given by the Americans that of the president.

“What will the young chief who comes from towards the sun, give?” demanded the Huron, observing that Heyward hesitated in his desire to end the enumeration of benefits with that which might form the climax of an Indian’s wishes.

“He will make the fire-water from the Islands in the salt lake flow before the wigwam of Magua, until the heart of the Indian shall be lighter than the feathers of the humming-bird, and his breath sweeter than the wild honeysuckle.”

Le Renard had listened gravely as Heyward slowly proceeded in his subtle speech. When the young man mentioned the artifice he supposed the Indian to have practised on his own nation, the countenance of the listener was veiled in an expression of cautious gravity. At the allusion to the injury which Duncan affected to believe had driven the Huron from his native tribe, a gleam of such ungovernable ferocity flashed from the other’s eyes, as induced the adventurous speaker to believe he had struck the proper chord. And by the time he reached the part where he so artfully blended the thirst of vengeance with the desire of gain, he had, at least, obtained a command of the deepest attention of the savage. The question put by Le Renard had been calm, and with all the dignity of an Indian; but it was quite apparent, by the thoughtful expression of the listener’s countenance, that the answer was most cunningly devised. The Huron mused a few moments, and then laying his hand on the rude bandages of his wounded shoulder, he said, with some energy —

“Do friends make such remarks?”

“Would La Longue Carabine cut one so light on an enemy?”

“Do the Delawares crawl upon those they love, like snakes, twisting themselves to strike?”

“Would Le Gros Serpent have been heard by the ears of one he wished to be deaf?”

“Does the white chief burn his powder in the faces of his brothers?”

“Does he ever miss his aim, when seriously bent to kill?” returned Duncan, smiling with well acted sincerity.

Another long and deliberate pause succeeded these sententious questions and ready replies. Duncan saw that the Indian hesitated. In order to complete his victory, he was in the act of recommencing the enumeration of the rewards, when Magua made an expressive gesture and said —

“Enough; Le Renard is a wise chief, and what he does will be seen. Go, and keep the mouth shut. When Magua speaks, it will be the time to answer.”

Heyward, perceiving that the eyes of his companion were warily fastened on the rest of the band, fell back immediately, in order to avoid the appearance of any suspicious confederacy with their leader. Magua approached the horses, and affected to be well pleased with the diligence and ingenuity of his comrades. He then signed to Heyward to assist the sisters into the saddles, for he seldom deigned to use the English tongue, unless urged by some motive of more than usual moment.

There was no longer any plausible pretext for delay; and Duncan was obliged, however reluctantly, to comply. As he performed this office, he whispered his reviving hopes in the ears of the trembling females, who, through dread of encountering the savage countenances of their captors, seldom raised their eyes from the ground. The mare of David had been taken with the followers of the large chief; in consequence, its owner, as well as Duncan, was compelled to journey on foot. The latter did not, however, so much regret this circumstance, as it might enable him to retard the speed of the party; for he still turned his longing looks in the direction of Fort Edward, in the vain expectation of catching some sound from that quarter of the forest, which might denote the approach of succor.

When all were prepared, Magua made the signal to proceed, advancing in front to lead the party in person. Next followed David, who was gradually coming to a true sense of his condition, as the effects of the wound became less and less apparent. The sisters rode in his rear, with Heyward at their side, while the Indians flanked the party, and brought up the close of the march, with a caution that seemed never to tire.

In this manner they proceeded in uninterrupted silence, except when Heyward addressed some solitary word of comfort to the females, or David gave vent to the moanings of his spirit in piteous exclamations, which he intended should express the humility of resignation. Their direction lay towards the south, and in a course nearly opposite to the road to William Henry. Notwithstanding this apparent adherence in Magua to the original determination of his conquerors, Heyward could not believe his tempting bait was so soon forgotten; and he knew the windings of an Indian path too well, to suppose that its apparent course led directly to its object, when artifice was at all necessary. Mile after mile was, however, passed through the boundless woods, in this painful manner, without any prospect of a termination to their journey. Heyward watched the sun, as he darted his meridian rays through the branches of the trees, and pined for the moment when the policy of Magua should change their route to one more favorable to his hopes. Sometimes he fancied the wary savage, despairing of passing the arm of Montcalm in safety, was holding his way towards a well-known border settlement, where a distinguished officer of the crown, and a favored friend of the Six Nations, held his large possessions, as well as his usual residence. To be delivered into the hands of Sir William Johnson was far preferable to being led into the wilds of Canada; but in order to effect even the former, it would be necessary to traverse the forest for many weary leagues, each step of which was carrying him farther from the scene of the war, and, consequently, from the post, not only of honor, but of duty.

Cora alone remembered the parting injunctions of the scout, and whenever an opportunity offered, she stretched forth her arm to bend aside the twigs that met her hands. But the vigilance of the Indians rendered this act of precaution both difficult and dangerous. She was often defeated in her purpose, by encountering their watchful eyes, when it became necessary to feign an alarm she did not feel, and occupy the limb by some gesture of feminine apprehension. Once, and once only, was she completely successful; when she broke down the bough of a large sumach, and, by a sudden thought, let her glove fall at the same instant. This sign, intended for those that might follow, was observed by one of her conductors, who restored the glove, broke the remaining branches of the bush in such a manner that it appeared to proceed from the struggling of some beast in its branches, and then laid his hand on his tomahawk, with a look so significant, that it put an effectual end to these stolen memorials of their passage.

As there were horses, to leave the prints of their footsteps, in both bands of the Indians, this interruption cut off any

probable hopes of assistance being conveyed through the means of their trail.

Heyward would have ventured a remonstrance, had there been anything encouraging in the gloomy reserve of Magua. But the savage, during all this time, seldom turned to look at his followers, and never spoke. With the sun for his only guide, or aided by such blind marks as are only known to the sagacity of a native, he held his way along the barrens of pine, through occasional little fertile vales, across brooks and rivulets, and over undulating hills, with the accuracy of instinct, and nearly with the directness of a bird. He never seemed to hesitate. Whether the path was hardly distinguishable, whether it disappeared, or whether it lay beaten and plain before him, made no sensible difference in his speed or certainty. It seemed as if fatigue could not affect him. Whenever the eyes of the wearied travellers rose from the decayed leaves over which they trod, his dark form was to be seen glancing among the stems of the trees in front, his head immovably fastened in a forward position, with the light plume on his crest fluttering in a current of air, made solely by the swiftness of his own motion.

But all this diligence and speed were not without an object. After crossing a low vale, through which a gushing brook meandered, he suddenly ascended a hill, so steep and difficult of ascent, that the sisters were compelled to alight, in order to follow. When the summit was gained, they found themselves on a level spot, but thinly covered with trees, under one of which Magua had thrown his dark form, as if willing and ready to seek that rest which was so much needed by the whole party.





## CHAPTER 11

*"Cursed by my tribe  
If I forgive him."*

—SHYLOCK.

The Indian had selected, for this desirable purpose, one of those steep, pyramidal hills, which bear a strong resemblance to artificial mounds, and which so frequently occur in the valleys of America. The one in question was high and precipitous; its top flattened, as usual; but with one of its sides more than ordinarily irregular. It possessed no other apparent advantage for a resting-place than in its elevation and form, which might render defence easy, and surprise nearly impossible. As Heyward, however, no longer expected that rescue which time and distance now rendered so improbable, he regarded these little peculiarities with an eye devoid of interest, devoting himself entirely to the comfort and condolence of his feebler companions. The Narragansetts were suffered to browse on the branches of the trees and shrubs that were thinly scattered over the summit of the hill, while the remains of their provisions were spread under the shade of a beech, that stretched its horizontal limbs like a canopy above them.

Notwithstanding the swiftness of their flight, one of the Indians had found an opportunity to strike a straggling fawn with an arrow, and had borne the more preferable fragments of the victim patiently on his shoulders, to the stopping-place. Without any aid from the science of cookery, he was immediately employed, in common with his fellows, in gorging himself with this digestible sustenance. Magua alone sat apart, without participation in the revolting meal, and apparently buried in the deepest thought.

This abstinence, so remarkable in an Indian, when he possessed the means of satisfying hunger, at length attracted the notice of Heyward. The young man willingly believed that the Huron deliberated on the most eligible manner of eluding the vigilance of his associates. With a view to assist his plans, by any suggestion of his own, and to strengthen the temptation, he left the beech, and straggled as if without an object, to the spot where Le Renard was seated.

"Has not Magua kept the sun in his face long enough to escape all danger from the Canadians?" he asked, as though no longer doubtful of the good intelligence established between them; "and will not the chief of William Henry be better pleased to see his daughters before another night may have hardened his heart to their loss, to make him less liberal in his reward?"

"Do the pale-faces love their children less in the morning than at night?" asked the Indian, coldly.

"By no means," returned Heyward, anxious to recall his error, if he had made one; "the white man may, and does often, forget the burial-place of his fathers; he sometimes ceases to remember those he should love and has promised to cherish; but the affection of a parent for his child is never permitted to die."

"And is the heart of the white-headed chief soft, and will he think of the babes that his squaws have given him? He is hard to his warriors, and his eyes are made of stone!"

"He is severe to the idle and wicked, but to the sober and deserving he is a leader, but just and humane. I have known many fond and tender parents, but never have I seen a man whose heart was softer towards his child. You have seen the gray-head in front of his warriors, Magua; but I have seen his eyes swimming in water, when he spoke of those children who are now in your power!"

Heyward paused, for he knew not how to construe the remarkable expression that gleamed across the swarthy features of the attentive Indian. At first it seemed as if the remembrance of the promised reward grew vivid in his mind, while he listened to the sources of parental feeling which were to assure its possession; but as Duncan proceeded, the expression of joy became so fiercely malignant, that it was impossible not to apprehend it proceeded from some passion more sinister than avarice.

"Go," said the Huron, suppressing the alarming exhibition in an instant, in a death-like calmness of countenance; "go to the dark-haired daughter, and say, Magua waits to speak. The father will remember what the child promises."

Duncan, who interpreted this speech to express a wish for some additional pledge that the promised gifts should not be withheld, slowly and reluctantly repaired to the place where the sisters were now resting from their fatigue, to communicate its purport to Cora.

"You understand the nature of an Indian's wishes," he concluded, as he led her towards the place where she was expected, "and must be prodigal of your offers of powder and blankets. Ardent spirits are, however, the most prized by such as he; nor would it be amiss to add some boon from your own hand, with that grace you so well know how to practise. Remember, Cora, that on your presence of mind and ingenuity even your life, as well as that of Alice, may in some measure depend."

"Heyward, and yours!"

"Mine is of little moment; it is already sold to my king, and is a prize to be seized by any enemy who may possess the power. I have no father to expect me, and but few friends to lament a fate which I have courted with the insatiable longings of youth after distinction. But hush! we approach the Indian. Magua, the lady with whom you wish to speak is here."

The Indian rose slowly from his seat, and stood for near a minute silent and motionless. He then signed with his hand for Heyward to retire, saying coldly —

"When the Huron talks to the women, his tribe shut their ears."

Duncan, still lingering, as if refusing to comply, Cora said, with a calm smile —

"You hear, Heyward, and delicacy at least should urge you to retire. Go to Alice, and comfort her with our reviving prospects."

She waited until he had departed, and then turning to the native, with the dignity of her sex in her voice and manner, she added, "What would Le Renard say to the daughter of Munro?"

"Listen," said the Indian, laying his hand firmly upon her arm, as if willing to draw her utmost attention to his words; a movement that Cora as firmly but quietly repulsed, by extricating the limb from his grasp: "Magua was born a chief and a warrior among the red Hurons of the lakes; he saw the suns of twenty summers make the snows of twenty winters run off in the streams, before he saw a pale-face; and he was happy! Then his Canada fathers came into the woods, and taught him to drink the fire-water, and he became a rascal. The Hurons drove him from the graves of his fathers, as they would chase the hunted buffalo. He ran down the shores of the lakes, and followed their outlet to the 'city of cannon.' There he hunted and fished, till the people chased him again through the woods into the arms of his enemies. The chief, who was born a Huron, was at last a warrior among the Mohawks!"

"Something like this I had heard before," said Cora, observing that he paused to suppress those passions which began to burn with too bright a flame, as he recalled the recollection of his supposed injuries.

"Was it the fault of Le Renard that his head was not made of rock? Who gave him the fire-water? who made him a villain? 'Twas the pale-faces, the people of your own color."

"And am I answerable that thoughtless and unprincipled men exist, whose shades of countenance may resemble mine?" Cora calmly demanded of the excited savage.

"No; Magua is a man, and not a fool; such as you never open their lips to the burning stream: the Great Spirit has given you wisdom!"

"What then have I to do, or say, in the matter of your misfortunes, not to say of your errors?"

"Listen," repeated the Indian, resuming his earnest attitude; "when his English and French fathers dug up the hatchet, Le Renard struck the war-post of the Mohawks, and went out against his own nation. The pale-faces have driven the redskins from their hunting-grounds, and now when they fight, a white man leads the way. The old chief at Horican, your father, was the great captain of our war-party. He said to the Mohawks do this, and do that, and he was minded. He made a law, that if an Indian swallowed the fire-water, and came into the cloth wigwams of his warriors, it should not be forgotten. Magua foolishly opened his mouth, and the hot liquor led him into the cabin of Munro. What did the gray-head? let his daughter say."

"He forgot not his words, and did justice by punishing the offender," said the undaunted daughter.

"Justice!" repeated the Indian, casting an oblique glance of the most ferocious expression at her unyielding countenance; "is it justice to make evil, and then punish for it? Magua was not himself; it was the fire-water that spoke and acted for him! but Munro did not believe it. The Huron chief was tied up before all the pale-faced warriors, and whipped like a dog."

Cora remained silent, for she knew not how to palliate this imprudent severity on the part of her father, in a manner to

suit the comprehension of an Indian.

"See!" continued Magua, tearing aside the slight calico that very imperfectly concealed his painted breast; "here are scars given by knives and bullets — of these a warrior may boast before his nation; but the gray-head has left marks on the back of the Huron chief, that he must hide, like a squaw, under this painted cloth of the whites."

"I had thought," resumed Cora, "that an Indian warrior was patient, and that his spirit felt not, and knew not, the pain his body suffered."

"When the Chippewas tied Magua to the stake, and cut this gash," said the other, laying his finger on a deep scar, "the Huron laughed in their faces, and told them, Women struck so light! His spirit was then in the clouds! But when he felt the blows of Munro, his spirit lay under the birch. The spirit of a Huron is never drunk; it remembers forever!"

"But it may be appeased. If my father has done you this injustice, show him how an Indian can forgive an injury, and take back his daughters. You have heard from Major Heyward —"

Magua shook his head, forbidding the repetition of offers he so much despised.

"What would you have?" continued Cora, after a most painful pause, while the conviction forced itself on her mind that the too sanguine and generous Duncan had been cruelly deceived by the cunning of the savage.

"What a Huron loves — good for good; bad for bad!"

"You would then revenge the injury inflicted by Munro on his helpless daughters. Would it not be more like a man to go before his face, and take the satisfaction of a warrior?"

"The arms of the pale-faces are long, and their knives sharp!" returned the savage, with a malignant laugh: "why should Le Renard go among the muskets of his warriors, when he holds the spirit of the gray-head in his hand?"

"Name your intention, Magua," said Cora, struggling with herself to speak with steady calmness. "Is it to lead us prisoners to the woods, or do you contemplate even some greater evil? Is there no reward, no means of palliating the injury, and of softening your heart? At least, release my gentle sister, and pour out all your malice on me. Purchase wealth by her safety, and satisfy your revenge with a single victim. The loss of both of his daughters might bring the aged man to his grave, and where would then be the satisfaction of Le Renard?"

"Listen," said the Indian again. "The light eyes can go back to the Horican, and tell the old chief what has been done, if the dark-haired woman will swear by the Great Spirit of her fathers to tell no lie."

"What must I promise?" demanded Cora, still maintaining a secret ascendancy over the fierce native, by the collected and feminine dignity of her presence.

"When Magua left his people, his wife was given to another chief; he has now made friends with the Hurons, and will go back to the graves of his tribe, on the shores of the great lake. Let the daughter of the English chief follow, and live in his wigwam forever."

However revolting a proposal of such a character might prove to Cora, she retained, notwithstanding her powerful disgust, sufficient self-command to reply, without betraying the weakness.

"And what pleasure would Magua find in sharing his cabin with a wife he did not love; one who would be of a nation and color different from his own? It would be better to take the gold of Munro, and buy the heart of some Huron maid with his gifts."

The Indian made no reply for near a minute, but bent his fierce looks on the countenance of Cora, in such wavering glances, that her eyes sank with shame, under an impression that, for the first time, they had encountered an expression that no chaste female might endure. While she was shrinking within herself, in dread of having her ears wounded by some proposal still more shocking than the last, the voice of Magua answered, in its tones of deepest malignancy —

"When the blows scorched the back of the Huron, he would know where to find a woman to feel the smart. The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison. The body of the gray-head would sleep among his cannon, but his heart would lie within reach of the knife of Le Subtil."

"Monster! well dost thou deserve thy treacherous name!" cried Cora, in an ungovernable burst of filial indignation. "None but a fiend could meditate such a vengeance! But thou overratest thy power! You shall find it is, in truth, the heart of Munro you hold, and that it will defy your utmost malice!"

The Indian answered this bold defiance by a ghastly smile, that showed an unaltered purpose, while he motioned her

away, as if to close the conference forever. Cora, already regretting her precipitation, was obliged to comply, for Magua instantly left the spot, and approached his gluttonous comrades. Heyward flew to the side of the agitated female, and demanded the result of a dialogue that he had watched at a distance with so much interest. But unwilling to alarm the fears of Alice, she evaded a direct reply, betraying only by her countenance her utter want of success, and keeping her anxious looks fastened on the slightest movements of their captors. To the reiterated and earnest questions of her sister, concerning their probable destination, she made no other answer than by pointing towards the dark group, with an agitation she could not control, and murmuring, as she folded Alice to her bosom —

“There, there; read our fortunes in their faces; we shall see; we shall see!”

The action, and the choked utterance of Cora, spoke more impressively than any words, and quickly drew the attention of her companions on that spot where her own was riveted with an intenseness that nothing but the importance of the stake could create.

When Magua reached the cluster of lolling savages, who, gorged with their disgusting meal, lay stretched on the earth in brutal indulgence, he commenced speaking with the dignity of an Indian chief. The first syllables he uttered had the effect to cause his listeners to raise themselves in attitudes of respectful attention. As the Huron used his native language, the prisoners, notwithstanding the caution of the natives had kept them within the swing of their tomahawks, could only conjecture the substance of his harrangue, from the nature of those significant gestures with which an Indian always illustrates his eloquence.

At first, the language, as well as the action of Magua, appeared calm and deliberate. When he had succeeded in sufficiently awakening the attention of his comrades, Heyward fancied, by his pointing so frequently towards the direction of the great lakes, that he spoke of the land of their fathers, and of their distant tribe. Frequent indications of applause escaped the listeners, who, as they uttered the expressive “Huh!” looked at each other in commendation of the speaker. Le Renard was too skilful to neglect his advantage. He now spoke of the long and painful route by which they had left those spacious grounds and happy villages, to come and battle against the enemies of their Canadian fathers. He enumerated the warriors of the party; their several merits; their frequent services to the nation; their wounds, and the number of the scalps they had taken. Whenever he alluded to any present (and the subtle Indian neglected none), the dark countenance of the flattered individual gleamed with exultation, nor did he even hesitate to assert the truth of the words, by gestures of applause and confirmation. Then the voice of the speaker fell, and lost the loud, animated tones of triumph with which he had enumerated their deeds of success and victory. He described the cataract of Glenn’s; the impregnable position of its rocky island, with its caverns, and its numerous rapids and whirlpools; he named the name of La Longue Carabine, and paused until the forest beneath them had sent up the last echo of a loud and long yell, with which the hated appellation was received. He pointed towards the youthful military captive, and described the death of a favorite warrior, who had been precipitated into the deep ravine by his hand. He not only mentioned the fate of him who, hanging between heaven and earth, had presented such a spectacle of horror to the whole band, but he acted anew the terrors of his situation, his resolution and his death, on the branches of a sapling; and, finally, he rapidly recounted the manner in which each of their friends had fallen, never failing to touch upon their courage, and their most acknowledged virtues. When this recital of events was ended, his voice once more changed, and became plaintive, and even musical, in its low guttural sounds. He now spoke of the wives and children of the slain; their destitution; their misery, both physical and moral; their distance; and, at last, of their unavenged wrongs. Then suddenly lifting his voice to a pitch of terrific energy, he concluded, by demanding —

“Are the Hurons dogs to bear this? Who shall say to the wife of Menowgua that the fishes have his scalp, and that his nation have not taken revenge! Who will dare meet the mother of Wassawattimie, that scornful woman, with his hands clean! What shall be said to the old men when they ask us for scalps, and we have not a hair from a white head to give them! The women will point their fingers at us. There is a dark spot on the names of the Hurons, and it must be hid in blood!”

His voice was no longer audible in the burst of rage which now broke into the air, as if the wood, instead of containing so small a band, was filled with the nation. During the foregoing address the progress of the speaker was too plainly read by those most interested in his success, through the medium of the countenances of the men he addressed. They had answered his melancholy and mourning by sympathy and sorrow; his assertions, by gestures of confirmation; and his boastings, with the exultation of savages. When he spoke of courage, their looks were firm and responsive; when he alluded

to their injuries, their eyes kindled with fury; when he mentioned the taunts of the women, they dropped their heads in shame; but when he pointed out their means of vengeance, he struck a chord which never failed to thrill in the breast of an Indian. With the first intimation that it was within their reach, the whole band sprang upon their feet as one man; giving utterance to their rage in the most frantic cries, they rushed upon their prisoners in a body with drawn knives and uplifted tomahawks. Heyward threw himself between the sisters and the foremost, whom he grappled with a desperate strength that for a moment checked his violence. This unexpected resistance gave Magua time to interpose, and with rapid enunciation and animated gesture, he drew the attention of the band again to himself. In that language he knew so well how to assume, he diverted his comrades from their instant purpose, and invited them to prolong the misery of their victims. His proposal was received with acclamations, and executed with the swiftness of thought.

Two powerful warriors cast themselves on Heyward, while another was occupied in securing the less active singing-master. Neither of the captives, however, submitted without a desperate though fruitless struggle. Even David hurled his assailant to the earth; nor was Heyward secured until the victory over his companion enabled the Indians to direct their united force to that object. He was then bound and fastened to the body of the sapling, on whose branches Magua had acted the pantomime of the falling Huron. When the young soldier regained his recollection, he had the painful certainty before his eyes that a common fate was intended for the whole party. On his right was Cora, in a durance similar to his own, pale and agitated, but with an eye, whose steady look still read the proceedings of their enemies. On his left, the withes which bound her to a pine, performed that office for Alice which her trembling limbs refused, and alone kept her fragile form from sinking. Her hands were clasped before her in prayer, but instead of looking upwards towards that power which alone could rescue them, her unconscious looks wandered to the countenance of Duncan with infantile dependency. David had contended, and the novelty of the circumstance held him silent, in deliberation on the propriety of the unusual occurrence.

The vengeance of the Hurons had now taken a new direction, and they prepared to execute it with that barbarous ingenuity with which they were familiarized by the practice of centuries. Some sought knots, to raise the blazing pile; one was riving the splinters of pine, in order to pierce the flesh of their captives with the burning fragments; and others bent the tops of two saplings to the earth, in order to suspend Heyward by the arms between the recoiling branches. But the vengeance of Magua sought a deeper and a more malignant enjoyment.

While the less refined monsters of the band prepared, before the eyes of those who were to suffer, these well known and vulgar means of torture, he approached Cora, and pointed out, with the most malign expression of countenance, the speedy fate that awaited her:—

“Ha!” he added, “what says the daughter of Munro? Her head is too good to find a pillow in the wigwam of Le Renard; will she like it better when it rolls about this hill a plaything for the wolves? Her bosom cannot nurse the children of a Huron; she will see it spit upon by Indians!”

“What means the monster!” demanded the astonished Heyward.

“Nothing!” was the firm reply. “He is a savage, a barbarous and ignorant savage, and knows not what he does. Let us find leisure, with our dying breath, to ask for him penitence and pardon.”

“Pardon!” echoed the fierce Huron, mistaking, in his anger, the meaning of her words; “the memory of an Indian is longer than the arm of the pale-faces; his mercy shorter than their justice! Say; shall I send the yellow hair to her father, and will you follow Magua to the great lakes, to carry his water, and feed him with corn?”

Cora beckoned him away, with an emotion of disgust she could not control.

“Leave me,” she said, with a solemnity that for a moment checked the barbarity of the Indian; “you mingle bitterness in my prayers; you stand between me and my God!”

The slight impression produced on the savage was, however, soon forgotten, and he continued pointing, with taunting irony, towards Alice.

“Look! the child weeps! She is young to die! Send her to Munro, to comb his gray hairs, and keep life in the heart of the old man.”

Cora could not resist the desire to look upon her youthful sister, in whose eyes she met an imploring glance, that betrayed the longings of nature.

“What says he, dearest Cora?” asked the trembling voice of Alice. “Did he speak of sending me to our father?”

For many moments the elder sister looked upon the younger, with a countenance that wavered with powerful and contending emotions. At length she spoke, though her tones had lost their rich and calm fulness, in an expression of tenderness that seemed maternal.

"Alice," she said, "the Huron offers us both life, nay, more than both; he offers to restore Duncan, our invaluable Duncan, as well as you, to our friends — to our father — to our heart-stricken, childless father, if I will bow down this rebellious, stubborn pride of mine, and consent —"

Her voice became choked, and clasping her hands, she looked upward, as if seeking, in her agony, intelligence from a wisdom that was infinite.

"Say on," cried Alice; "to what, dearest Cora? O, that the proffer were made to me! to save you, to cheer our aged father, to restore Duncan, how cheerfully could I die!"

"Die!" repeated Cora, with a calmer and a firmer voice, "that were easy! Perhaps the alternative may not be less so. He would have me," she continued, her accents sinking under a deep consciousness of the degradation of the proposal, "follow him to the wilderness; go to the habitations of the Hurons; to remain there: in short to become his wife! Speak, then, Alice; child of my affections! sister of my love! And you, too, Major Heyward, aid my weak reason with your counsel. Is life to be purchased by such a sacrifice? Will you, Alice, receive it at my hands at such a price? And *you*, Duncan, guide me; control me between you; for I am wholly yours."

"Would I!" echoed the indignant and astonished youth. "Cora! Cora! you jest with our misery! Name not the horrid alternative again; the thought itself is worse than a thousand deaths."

"That such would be *your* answer, I well knew!" exclaimed Cora, her cheeks flushing, and her dark eyes once more sparkling with the lingering emotions of a woman. "What says my Alice? for her will I submit without another murmur."

Although both Heyward and Cora listened with painful suspense and the deepest attention, no sounds were heard in reply. It appeared as if the delicate and sensitive form of Alice would shrink into itself, as she listened to this proposal. Her arms had fallen lengthwise before her, the fingers moving in slight convulsions; her head dropped upon her bosom, and her whole person seemed suspended against the tree, looking like some beautiful emblem of the wounded delicacy of her sex, devoid of animation, and yet keenly conscious. In a few moments, however, her head began to move slowly, in a sign of deep, unconquerable disapprobation.

"No, no, no; better that we die as we have lived, together!"

"Then die!" shouted Magua, hurling his tomahawk with violence at the unresisting speaker, and gnashing his teeth with a rage that could no longer be bridled, at this sudden exhibition of firmness in the one he believed the weakest of the party. The axe cleaved the air in front of Heyward, and cutting some of the flowing ringlets of Alice, quivered in the tree above her head. The sight maddened Duncan to desperation. Collecting all his energies in one effort, he snapped the twigs which bound him and rushed upon another savage who was preparing with loud yells, and a more deliberate aim, to repeat the blow. They encountered, grappled, and fell to the earth together. The naked body of his antagonist afforded Heyward no means of holding his adversary, who glided from his grasp, and rose again with one knee on his chest, pressing him down with the weight of a giant. Duncan already saw the knife gleaming in the air, when a whistling sound swept past him, and was rather accompanied, than followed, by the sharp crack of a rifle. He felt his breast relieved from the load it had endured; he saw the savage expression of his adversary's countenance change to a look of vacant wildness, when the Indian fell dead on the faded leaves by his side.



## CHAPTER 12

*"C.L.O.— I am gone, sir,  
And anon, sir,  
I'll be with you again."*

—TWELFTH NIGHT.

The Hurons stood aghast at this sudden visitation of death on one of their band. But, as they regarded the fatal accuracy of an aim which had dared to immolate an enemy at so much hazard to a friend, the name of "La Longue Carabine" burst simultaneously from every lip, and was succeeded by a wild and a sort of plaintive howl. The cry was answered by a loud shout from a little thicket, where the incautious party had piled their arms; and at the next moment, Hawkeye, too eager to load the rifle he had regained, was seen advancing upon them, brandishing the clubbed weapon, and cutting the air with wide and powerful sweeps. Bold and rapid as was the progress of the scout, it was exceeded by that of a light and vigorous form which, bounding past him, leaped, with incredible activity and daring, into the very centre of the Hurons, where it stood, whirling a tomahawk, and flourishing a glittering knife, with fearful menaces, in front of Cora. Quicker than the thoughts could follow these unexpected and audacious movements, an image, armed in the emblematic panoply of death, glided before their eyes, and assumed a threatening attitude at the other's side. The savage tormentors recoiled before these warlike intruders, and uttered as they appeared in such quick succession, the often repeated and peculiar exclamation of surprise, followed by the well known and dreaded appellations of —

"Le Cerf Agile! Le Gros Serpent!"

But the wary and vigilant leader of the Hurons was not so easily disconcerted. Casting his keen eyes around the little plain, he comprehended the nature of the assault at a glance, and encouraging his followers by his voice as well as by his example, he unsheathed his long and dangerous knife, and rushed with a loud whoop upon the expecting Chingachgook. It was the signal for a general combat. Neither party had fire-arms, and the contest was to be decided in the deadliest manner; hand to hand, with weapons of offence, and none of defence.

Uncas answered the whoop, and leaping on an enemy, with a single, well directed blow of his tomahawk, cleft him to the brain. Heyward tore the weapon of Magua from the sapling, and rushed eagerly towards the fray. As the combatants were now equal in number, each singled an opponent from the adverse band. The rush and blows passed with the fury of a whirlwind, and the swiftness of lightning. Hawkeye soon got another enemy within reach of his arm, and with one sweep of his formidable weapon he beat down the slight and inartificial defences of his antagonist, crushing him to the earth with the blow. Heyward ventured to hurl the tomahawk he had seized, too ardent to await the moment of closing. It struck the Indian he had selected on the forehead, and checked for an instant his onward rush. Encouraged by this slight advantage, the impetuous young man continued his onset, and sprang upon his enemy with naked hands. A single instant was enough to assure him of the rashness of the measure, for he immediately found himself fully engaged, with all his activity and courage, in endeavoring to ward the desperate thrusts made with the knife of the Huron. Unable longer to foil an enemy so alert and vigilant, he threw his arms about him, and succeeded in pinning the limbs of the other to his side, with an iron grasp, but one that was far too exhausting to himself to continue long. In this extremity he heard a voice near him, shouting —

"Extarminate the varlets! no quarter to an accursed Mingo!"

At the next moment, the breech of Hawkeye's rifle fell on the naked head of his adversary, whose muscles appeared to wither under the shock, as he sank from the arms of Duncan, flexible and motionless.

When Uncas had brained his first antagonist, he turned, like a hungry lion, to seek another. The fifth and only Huron disengaged at the first onset had paused a moment, and then seeing that all around him were employed in the deadly strife, he sought, with hellish vengeance, to complete the baffled work of revenge. Raising a shout of triumph, he sprang towards the defenceless Cora, sending his keen axe, as the dreadful precursor of his approach. The tomahawk grazed her shoulder, and cutting the withes which bound her to the tree, left the maiden at liberty to fly. She eluded the grasp of the savage, and reckless of her own safety, threw herself on the bosom of Alice, striving with convulsed and ill-directed fingers, to tear asunder the twigs which confined the person of her sister. Any other than a monster would have relented at such an act of generous devotion to the best and purest affection; but the breast of the Huron was a stranger to sympathy. Seizing

Cora by the rich tresses which fell in confusion about her form, he tore her from her frantic hold, and bowed her down with brutal violence to her knees. The savage drew the flowing curls through his hand, and raising them on high with an outstretched arm, he passed the knife around the exquisitely moulded head of his victim, with a taunting and exulting laugh. But he purchased this moment of fierce gratification with the loss of the fatal opportunity. It was just then the sight caught the eye of Uncas. Bounding from his footsteps he appeared for an instant darting through the air, and descending in a ball he fell on the chest of his enemy, driving him many yards from the spot, headlong and prostrate. The violence of the exertion cast the young Mohican at his side. They arose together, fought, and bled, each in his turn. But the conflict was soon decided; the tomahawk of Heyward and the rifle of Hawkeye descended on the skull of the Huron, at the same moment that the knife of Uncas reached his heart.

The battle was now entirely terminated, with the exception of the protracted struggle between *Le Renard Subtil* and *Le Gros Serpent*. Well did these barbarous warriors prove that they deserved those significant names which had been bestowed for deeds in former wars. When they engaged, some little time was lost in eluding the quick and vigorous thrusts which had been aimed at their lives. Suddenly darting on each other, they closed, and came to the earth, twisted together like twining serpents, in pliant and subtle folds. At the moment when the victors found themselves unoccupied, the spot where these experienced and desperate combatants lay, could only be distinguished by a cloud of dust and leaves which moved from the centre of the little plain towards its boundary, as if raised by the passage of a whirlwind. Urged by the different motives of filial affection, friendship, and gratitude, Heyward and his companions rushed with one accord to the place, encircling the little canopy of dust which hung above the warriors. In vain did Uncas dart around the cloud, with a wish to strike his knife into the heart of his father's foe; the threatening rifle of Hawkeye was raised and suspended in vain, while Duncan endeavored to seize the limbs of the Huron with hands that appeared to have lost their power. Covered, as they were, with dust and blood, the swift evolutions of the combatants seemed to incorporate their bodies into one. The death-like looking figure of the Mohican, and the dark form of the Huron, gleamed before their eyes in such quick and confused succession, that the friends of the former knew not where nor when to plant the succoring blow. It is true there were short and fleeting moments, when the fiery eyes of Magua were seen glittering, like the fabled organs of the basilisk, through the dusty wreath by which he was enveloped, and he read by those short and deadly glances the fate of the combat in the presence of his enemies; ere, however, any hostile hand could descend on his devoted head, its place was filled by the scowling visage of Chingachgook. In this manner the scene of the combat was removed from the centre of the little plain to its verge. The Mohican now found an opportunity to make a powerful thrust with his knife; Magua suddenly relinquished his grasp, and fell backward without motion, and seemingly without life. His adversary leaped on his feet, making the arches of the forest ring with the sounds of triumph.

"Well done for the Delawares! victory to the Mohican!" cried Hawkeye, once more elevating the butt of the long and fatal rifle; "a finishing blow from a man without a cross will never tell against his honor, nor rob him of his right to the scalp."

But, at the very moment when the dangerous weapon was in the act of descending, the subtle Huron rolled swiftly from beneath the danger, over the edge of the precipice, and falling on his feet, was seen leaping, with a single bound, into the centre of a thicket of low bushes, which clung along its sides. The Delawares, who had believed their enemy dead, uttered their exclamation of surprise, and were following with speed and clamor, like hounds in open view of the deer, when a shrill and peculiar cry from the scout instantly changed their purpose, and recalled them to the summit of the hill.

"'Twas like himself," cried the inveterate forester, whose prejudices contributed so largely to veil his natural sense of justice in all matters which concerned the Mingos; "a lying and deceitful varlet as he is. An honest Delaware now, being fairly vanquished, would have lain still, and been knocked on the head, but these knavish Maquas cling to life like so many cats-o'-the-mountain. Let him go — let him go; 'tis but one man, and he without rifle or bow, many a long mile from his French comrades; and, like a rattler that has lost his fangs, he can do no further mischief, until such time as he, and we too, may leave the prints of our moccasins over a long reach of sandy plain. See, Uncas," he added, in Delaware, "your father is flaying the scalps already. It may be well to go round and feel the vagabonds that are left, or we may have another of them loping through the woods, and screeching like a jay that has been winged."



So saying, the honest, but implacable scout, made the circuit of the dead, into whose senseless bosoms he thrust his long knife, with as much coolness as though they had been so many brute carcasses. He had, however, been anticipated by the elder Mohican, who had already torn the emblems of victory from the unresisting heads of the slain. But Uncas, denying his habits, we had almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the females, and quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the arms of Cora. We shall not attempt to describe the gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of events which glowed in the bosoms of the sisters, who were thus unexpectedly restored to life and to each other. Their thanksgivings were deep and silent; the offerings of their gentle spirits, burning brightest and purest on the secret altars of their hearts; and their renovated and more earthly feelings exhibiting themselves in long and fervent, though speechless caresses. As Alice rose from her knees, where she had sunk by the side of Cora, she threw herself on the bosom of the latter; and sobbed aloud the name of their aged father, while her soft, dove-like eyes sparkled with the rays of hope. "We are saved! we are saved!" she murmured; "to return to the arms of our dear, dear father, and his heart will not be broken with grief. And you too, Cora, my sister; my more than sister, my mother; you too are spared. And Duncan," she added, looking round upon the youth with a smile of ineffable innocence, "even our own brave and noble Duncan has escaped without a hurt."

To these ardent and nearly incoherent words Cora made no other answer than by straining the youthful speaker to her heart, as she bent over her, in melting tenderness. The manhood of Heyward felt no shame in dropping tears over this spectacle of affectionate rapture; and Uncas stood, fresh and blood-stained from the combat, a calm, and, apparently, an unmoved looker-on, it is true, but with eyes that had already lost their fierceness, and were beaming with a sympathy that elevated him far above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices of his nation.

During this display of emotions so natural in their situation, Hawkeye, whose vigilant distrust had satisfied itself that the Hurons, who disfigured the heavenly scene, no longer possessed the power to interrupt its harmony, approached David, and liberated him from the bonds he had, until that moment, endured with the most exemplary patience.

"There," exclaimed the scout, casting the last wither behind him, "you are once more master of your own limbs, though you seem not to use them with greater judgment than that in which they were first fashioned. If advice from one who is not older than yourself, but who having lived most of his time in the wilderness, may be said to have experience beyond his years, will give no offence, you are welcome to my thoughts; and these are, to part with the little tooting instrument in your jacket to the first fool you meet with, and buy some useful we'pon with the money, if it be only the barrel of a horseman's pistol. By industry and care, you might thus come to some prefarment; for by this time, I should think, your eyes would plainly tell you that a carrion crow is a better bird than a mocking thrasher. The one will, at least, remove foul sights from before the face of man, while the other is only good to brew disturbances in the woods, by cheating the ears of all that hear them."

"Arms and the clarion for the battle, but the song of thanksgiving to the victory!" answered the liberated David. "Friend," he added, thrusting forth his lean, delicate hand towards Hawkeye, in kindness, while his eyes twinkled and grew moist, "I thank thee that the hairs of my head still grow where they were first rooted by Providence; for, though those of other men may be more glossy and curling, I have ever found mine own well suited to the brain they shelter. That I did not join myself to the battle, was less owing to disinclination, than to the bonds of the heathen. Valiant and skilful hast thou proved thyself in the conflict, and I hereby thank thee, before proceeding to discharge other and more important duties, because thou hast proved thyself well worthy of a Christian's praise."

"The thing is but a trifle, and what you may often see, if you tarry long among us," returned the scout, a good deal softened towards the man of song, by this unequivocal expression of gratitude. "I have got back my old companion, 'Killdeer,'" he added, striking his hand on the breech of his rifle; "and that in itself is a victory. These Iroquois are cunning, but they outwitted themselves when they placed their fire-arms out of reach; and had Uncas or his father been gifted with only their common Indian patience, we should have come in upon the knaves with three bullets instead of one, and that would have made a finish of the whole pack; yon loping varlet, as well as his comrades. But 'twas all foreordered, and for the best."

"Thou sayest well," returned David, "and hast caught the true spirit of Christianity. He that is to be saved will be saved, and he that is predestined to be damned will be damned. This is the doctrine of truth, and most consoling and refreshing it is to the true believer."

The scout, who by this time was seated, examining into the state of his rifle with a species of parental assiduity, now looked up at the other in a displeasure that he did not affect to conceal, roughly interrupting further speech.

"Doctrine, or no doctrine," said the sturdy woodsman, "'tis the belief of knaves, and the curse of an honest man. I can credit that yonder Huron was to fall by my hand, for with my own eyes I have seen it; but nothing short of being a witness will cause me to think he had met with any reward, or that Chingachgook, there, will be condemned at the final day."

"You have no warranty for such an audacious doctrine, nor any covenant to support it," cried David, who was deeply tintured with the subtle distinctions which, in his time, and more especially in his province, had been drawn around the beautiful simplicity of revelation, by endeavoring to penetrate the awful mystery of the divine nature, supplying faith by self-sufficiency, and by consequence, involving those who reasoned from such human dogmas in absurdities and doubt; "your temple is reared on the sands, and the first tempest will wash away its foundation. I demand your authorities for such an uncharitable assertion (like other advocates of a system, David was not always accurate in his use of terms). Name

chapter and verse; in which of the holy books do you find language to support you?"

"Book!" repeated Hawkeye, with singular and ill-concealed disdain; "do you take me for a whimpering boy at the apron-string of one of your old gals; and this good rifle on my knee for the feather of a goose's wing, my ox's horn for a bottle of ink, and my leathern pouch for a cross-barred handkercher to carry my dinner? Book! what have such as I, who am a warrior of the wilderness, though a man without a cross, to do with books? I never read but in one, and the words that are written there are too simple and too plain to need much schooling; though I may boast that of forty long and hard-working years."

"What call you the volume?" said David, misconceiving the other's meaning.

"Tis open before your eyes," returned the scout; "and he who owns it is not a niggard of its use. I have heard it said that there are men who read in books to convince themselves there is a God. I know not but man may so deform his works in the settlement, as to leave that which is so clear in the wilderness a matter of doubt among traders and priests. If any such there be, and he will follow me from sun to sun, through the windings of the forest, he shall see enough to teach him that he is a fool, and that the greatest of his folly lies in striving to rise to the level of One he can never equal, be it in goodness, or be it in power."

The instant David discovered that he battled with a disputant who imbibed his faith from the lights of nature, eschewing all subtleties of doctrine, he willingly abandoned a controversy from which he believed neither profit nor credit was to be derived. While the scout was speaking, he had also seated himself, and producing the ready little volume and the iron-rimmed spectacles, he prepared to discharge a duty, which nothing but the unexpected assault he had received in his orthodoxy could have so long suspended. He was, in truth, a minstrel of the western continent — of a much later day, certainly, than those gifted bards, who formerly sang the profane renown of baron and prince, but after the spirit of his own age and country; and he was now prepared to exercise the cunning of his craft, in celebration of, or rather in thanksgiving for, the recent victory. He waited patiently for Hawkeye to cease, then lifting his eyes, together with his voice, he said, aloud —

"I invite you, friends, to join in praise for this signal deliverance from the hands of barbarians and infidels, to the comfortable and solemn tones of the tune, called 'Northampton.'"

He next named the page and verse where the rhymes selected were to be found, and applied the pitch-pipe to his lips, with the decent gravity that he had been wont to use in the temple. This time he was, however, without any accompaniment, for the sisters were just then pouring out those tender effusions of affection which have been already alluded to. Nothing deterred by the smallness of his audience, which, in truth, consisted only of the discontented scout, he raised his voice, commencing and ending the sacred song without accident or interruption of any kind.

Hawkeye listened, while he coolly adjusted his flint and reloaded his rifle; but the sounds, wanting the extraneous assistance of scene and sympathy, failed to awaken his slumbering emotions. Never minstrel, or by whatever more suitable name David should be known, drew upon his talents in the presence of more insensible auditors; though considering the singleness and sincerity of his motive, it is probable that no bard of profane song ever uttered notes that ascended so near to that throne where all homage and praise is due. The scout shook his head, and muttering some unintelligible words, among which "throat" and "Iroquois," were alone audible, he walked away, to collect, and to examine into, the state of the captured arsenal of the Hurons. In this office he was now joined by Chingachgook, who found his own, as well as the rifle of his son, among the arms. Even Heyward and David were furnished with weapons; nor was ammunition wanting to render them all effectual.

When the foresters had made their selection, and distributed their prizes, the scout announced that the hour had arrived when it was necessary to move. By this time the song of Gamut had ceased, and the sisters had learned to still the exhibition of their emotions. Aided by Duncan and the younger Mohican, the two latter descended the precipitous sides of that hill which they had so lately ascended under so very different auspices, and whose summit had so nearly proved the scene of their massacre. At the foot, they found the Narragansetts browsing the herbage of the bushes; and having mounted, they followed the movements of a guide, who, in the most deadly straits, had so often proved himself their friend. The journey was, however, short. Hawkeye, leaving the blind path that the Hurons had followed, turned short to his right, and entering the thicket, he crossed a babbling brook, and halted in a narrow dell, under the shade of a few water elms. Their distance from the base of the fatal hill was but a few rods, and the steeds had been serviceable only in crossing

the shallow stream.

The scout and the Indians appeared to be familiar with the sequestered place where they now were; for, leaning their rifles against the trees, they commenced throwing aside the dried leaves, and opening the blue clay, out of which a clear and sparkling spring of bright, glancing water, quickly bubbled. The white man then looked about him, as though seeking for some object, which was not to be found as readily as he expected:—

“Them careless imps, the Mohawks, with their Tuscarora and Onondaga brethren, have been here slaking their thirst,” he muttered, “and the vagabonds have thrown away the gourd! This is the way with benefits, when they are bestowed on such disremembering hounds! Here has the Lord laid his hand, in the midst of the howling wilderness, for their good, and raised a fountain of water from the bowels of the ‘arth, that might laugh at the richest shop of apothecary’s ware in all the colonies; and see! the knaves have trodden in the clay, and deformed the cleanliness of the place, as though they were brute beasts, instead of human men.”

Uncas silently extended towards him the desired gourd, which the spleen of Hawkeye had hitherto prevented him from observing, on a branch of an elm. Filling it with water, he retired a short distance, to a place where the ground was more firm and dry; here he coolly seated himself, and after taking a long, and, apparently, a grateful draught, he commenced a very strict examination of the fragments of food left by the Hurons, which had hung in a wallet on his arm.

“Thank you, lad!” he continued, returning the empty gourd to Uncas; “now we will see how these rampaging Hurons lived, when outlying in ambushments. Look at this! The varlets know the better pieces of the deer; and one would think they might carve and roast a saddle, equal to the best cook in the land! But everything is raw, for the Iroquois are thorough savages. Uncas, take my steel, and kindle a fire; a mouthful of a tender broil will give natur’ a helping hand, after so long a trail.”

Heyward, perceiving that their guides now set about their repast in sober earnest, assisted the ladies to alight, and placed himself at their side, not unwilling to enjoy a few moments of grateful rest, after the bloody scene he had just gone through. While the culinary process was in hand, curiosity induced him to inquire into the circumstances which had led to their timely and unexpected rescue:—

“How is it that we see you so soon, my generous friend,” he asked, “and without aid from the garrison of Edward?”

“Had we gone to the bend in the river, we might have been in time to rake the leaves over your bodies, but too late to have saved your scalps,” coolly answered the scout. “No, no; instead of throwing away strength and opportunity by crossing to the fort, we lay by, under the bank of the Hudson, waiting to watch the movements of the Hurons.”

“You were, then, witnesses of all that passed?”

“Not of all; for Indian sight is too keen to be easily cheated, and we kept close. A difficult matter it was, too, to keep this Mohican boy snug in the ambushment. Ah! Uncas, Uncas, your behavior was more like that of a curious woman than of a warrior on his scent.”

Uncas permitted his eyes to turn for an instant on the sturdy countenance of the speaker, but he neither spoke nor gave any indication of repentance. On the contrary, Heyward thought the manner of the young Mohican was disdainful, if not a little fierce, and that he suppressed passions that were ready to explode, as much in compliment to the listeners, as from the deference he usually paid to his white associate.

“You saw our capture?” Heyward next demanded.

“We heard it,” was the significant answer. “An Indian yell is plain language to men who have passed their days in the woods. But when you landed, we were driven to crawl, like serpents, beneath the leaves; and then we lost sight of you entirely, until we placed eyes on you again, trussed to the trees, and ready bound for an Indian massacre.”

“Our rescue was the deed of Providence. It was nearly a miracle that you did not mistake the path, for the Hurons divided, and each band had its horses.”

“Ay! there we were thrown off the scent, and might, indeed, have lost the trail, had it not been for Uncas; we took the path, however, that led into the wilderness; for we judged, and judged rightly, that the savages would hold that course with their prisoners. But when we had followed it for many miles, without finding a single twig broken, as I had advised, my mind misgave me; especially as all the footsteps had the prints of moccasins.”

“Our captors had the precaution to see us shod like themselves,” said Duncan, raising a foot, and exhibiting the buckskin he wore.

“Ay, 'twas judgmatical, and like themselves; though we were too expert to be thrown from a trail by so common an invention.”

“To what, then, are we indebted for our safety?”

“To what, as a white man who has no taint of Indian blood, I should be ashamed to own; to the judgment of the young Mohican, in matters which I should know better than he, but which I can now hardly believe to be true, though my own eyes tell me it is so.”

“’Tis extraordinary! will you not name the reason?”

“Uncas was bold enough to say, that the beasts ridden by the gentle ones,” continued Hawkeye, glancing his eyes, not without curious interest, on the fillies of the ladies, “planted the legs of one side on the ground at the same time, which is contrary to the movements of all trotting four-footed animals of my knowledge, except the bear. And yet here are horses that always journey in this manner, as my own eyes have seen, and as their trail has shown for twenty long miles.”

“’Tis the merit of the animal! They come from the shores of Narragansett Bay, in the small province of Providence Plantations, and are celebrated for their hardihood, and the ease of this peculiar movement; though other horses are not unfrequently trained to the same.”

“It may be — it may be,” said Hawkeye, who had listened with singular attention to this explanation; “though I am a man who has the full blood of the whites, my judgment in deer and beaver is greater than in beasts of burden. Major Effingham has many noble chargers, but I have never seen one travel after such a sideling gait.”

“True; for he would value the animals for very different properties. Still is this a breed highly esteemed, and as you witness, much honored with the burdens it is often destined to bear.”

The Mohicans had suspended their operations about the glimmering fire, to listen; and when Duncan had done, they looked at each other significantly, the father uttering the never-failing exclamation of surprise. The scout ruminated, like a man digesting his newly acquired knowledge, and once more stole a curious glance at the horses.

“I dare to say there are even stranger sights to be seen in the settlements!” he said, at length; “natur’ is sadly abused by man, when he once gets the mastery. But, go sideling or go straight, Uncas had seen the movement, and their trail led us on to the broken bush. The outer branch, near the prints of one of the horses, was bent upward, as a lady breaks a flower from its stem, but all the rest were ragged and broken down, as if the strong hand of a man had been tearing them! So I concluded that the cunning varmints had seen the twig bent, and had torn the rest, to make us believe a buck had been feeling the boughs with his antlers.”

“I do believe your sagacity did not deceive you; for some such thing occurred!”

“That was easy to see,” added the scout, in no degree conscious of having exhibited any extraordinary sagacity; “and a very different matter it was from a waddling horse! It then struck me the Mingos would push for this spring, for the knaves well know the virtue of its waters!”

“Is it, then, so famous?” demanded Heyward, examining, with a more curious eye, the secluded dell, with its bubbling fountain, surrounded, as it was, by earth of a deep dingy brown.

“Few redskins, who travel south and east of the great lakes, but have heard of its qualities. Will you taste for yourself?”

Heyward took the gourd, and after swallowing a little of the water, threw it aside with grimaces of discontent. The scout laughed in his silent, but heartfelt manner, and shook his head with vast satisfaction.

“Ah! you want the flavor that one gets by habit; the time was when I liked it as little as yourself; but I have come to my taste, and I now crave it, as a deer does the licks.<sup>17</sup> Your high spiced wines are not better liked than a redskin relishes this water; especially when his natur’ is ailing. But Uncas has made his fire, and it is time we think of eating, for our journey is long, and all before us.”

<sup>17</sup> Many of the animals of the American forests resort to those spots where salt springs are found. These are called “licks” or “salt licks,” in the language of the country, from the circumstance that the quadruped is often obliged to lick the earth, in order to obtain the saline particles. These licks are great places of resort with the hunters, who waylay their game near the paths that lead to them.

Interrupting the dialogue by this abrupt transition, the scout had instant recourse to the fragments of food which had escaped the voracity of the Hurons. A very summary process completed the simple cookery, when he and the Mohicans commenced their humble meal, with the silence and characteristic diligence of men who ate in order to enable themselves to endure great and unremitting toil.

When this necessary, and, happily, grateful duty had been performed, each of the foresters stooped and took a long and parting draught at that solitary and silent spring,<sup>18</sup> around which and its sister fountains, within fifty years, the wealth, beauty, and talents of a hemisphere were to assemble in throngs, in pursuit of health and pleasure. Then Hawkeye announced his determination to proceed. The sisters resumed their saddles; Duncan and David grasped their rifles, and followed on their footsteps; the scout leading the advance, and the Mohicans bringing up the rear. The whole party moved swiftly through the narrow path, towards the north, leaving the healing waters to mingle unheeded with the adjacent brook, and the bodies of the dead to fester on the neighboring mount, without the rites of sepulture; a fate but too common to the warriors of the woods to excite either commiseration or comment.

<sup>18</sup> The scene of the foregoing incidents is on the spot where the village of Ballston now stands; one of the two principal watering-places of America.



## CHAPTER 13

*"I'll seek a readier path."*

—PARNELL.

The route taken by Hawkeye lay across those sandy plains, relieved by occasional valleys and swells of land, which had been traversed by their party on the morning of the same day, with the baffled Magua for their guide. The sun had now fallen low towards the distant mountains; and as their journey lay through the interminable forest, the heat was no longer oppressive. Their progress, in consequence, was proportionate; and long before the twilight gathered about them, they had made good many toilsome miles on their return.

The hunter, like the savage whose place he filled, seemed to select among the blind signs of their wild route, with a species of instinct, seldom abating his speed, and never pausing to deliberate. A rapid and oblique glance at the moss on the trees, with an occasional upward gaze towards the setting sun, or a steady but passing look at the direction of the numerous water-courses, through which he waded, were sufficient to determine his path, and remove his greatest difficulties. In the meantime, the forest began to change its hues, losing that lively green which had embellished its arches, in the graver light which is the usual precursor of the close of day.

While the eyes of the sisters were endeavoring to catch glimpses through the trees, of the flood of golden glory which formed a glittering halo around the sun, tinged here and there with ruby streaks, or bordering with narrow edgings of shining yellow, a mass of clouds that lay piled at no great distance above the western hills, Hawkeye turned suddenly, and, pointing upwards towards the gorgeous heavens, he spoke:—

"Yonder is the signal given to a man to seek his food and natural rest," he said: "better and wiser would it be, if he could understand the signs of nature, and take a lesson from the fowls of the air and the beasts of the fields! Our night, however, will soon be over; for, with the moon, we must be up and moving again. I remember to have fought the Maquas, hereaways, in the first war in which I ever drew blood from man; and we threw up a work of blocks, to keep the ravenous varmints from handling our scalps. If my marks do not fail me, we shall find the place a few rods farther to our left."

Without waiting for an assent, or, indeed, for any reply, the sturdy hunter moved boldly into a dense thicket of young chestnuts, shoving aside the branches of the exuberant shoots which nearly covered the ground, like a man who expected, at each step, to discover some object he had formerly known. The recollection of the scout did not deceive him. After penetrating through the brush, matted as it was with briars, for a few hundred feet he entered an open space, that surrounded a low, green hillock, which was crowned by the decayed block-house in question. This rude and neglected building was one of those deserted works, which, having been thrown up on an emergency, had been abandoned with the disappearance of danger, and was now quietly crumbling in the solitude of the forest, neglected, and nearly forgotten, like the circumstances which had caused it to be reared. Such memorials of the passage and struggles of man are yet frequent throughout the broad barrier of wilderness which once separated the hostile provinces, and form a species of ruins that are intimately associated with the recollections of colonial history, and which are in appropriate keeping with the gloomy character of the surrounding scenery.<sup>19</sup> The roof of bark had long since fallen, and mingled with the soil; but the huge logs of pine, which had been hastily thrown together, still preserved their relative positions, though one angle of the work had given way under the pressure, and threatened a speedy downfall to the remainder of the rustic edifice. While Heyward and his companions hesitated to approach a building so decayed, Hawkeye and the Indians entered within the low walls, not only without fear, but with obvious interest. While the former surveyed the ruins, both internally and externally, with the curiosity of one whose recollections were reviving at each moment, Chingachgook related to his son, in the language of the Delawares, and with the pride of a conqueror, the brief history of the skirmish which had been fought, in his youth, in that secluded spot. A strain of melancholy, however, blended with his triumph, rendering his voice, as usual, soft and musical.

<sup>19</sup> Some years since, the writer was shooting in the vicinity of the ruins of Fort Oswego, which stands on the shores of Lake Ontario. His game was deer, and his chase a forest that stretched with little interruption, fifty miles inland. Unexpectedly he came upon six or eight ladders lying in the woods within a short distance of each other. They were rudely made, and much decayed. Wondering what could have assembled so many of these instruments in such a place, he sought an old man who resided near for the explanation.

During the war of 1776 Fort Oswego was held by the British. An expedition had been sent two hundred miles through the wilderness to surprise the fort. It appears that the Americans, on reaching the spot named, which was within a mile or two of the fort, first learned that they were expected, and in great danger of being cut off. They threw away their scaling-ladders, and made a rapid retreat. These ladders had lain unmolested thirty years, in the spot where

they had thus been cast.

In the meantime, the sisters gladly dismounted, and prepared to enjoy their halt in the coolness of the evening, and in a security which they believed nothing but the beasts of the forest could invade.

"Would not our resting-place have been more retired, my worthy friend," demanded the more vigilant Duncan, perceiving that the scout had already finished his short survey, "had we chosen a spot less known, and one more rarely visited than this?"

"Few live who know the block-house was ever raised," was the slow and musing answer; "'tis not often that books are made, and narratives written, of such a scrimmage as was here fought between the Mohicans and the Mohawks, in a war of their own waging. I was then a youngster, and went out with the Delawares, because I know'd they were a scandalized and wronged race. Forty days and forty nights did the imps crave our blood around this pile of logs, which I designed and partly reared, being, as you'll remember, no Indian myself, but a man without a cross. The Delawares lent themselves to the work, and we made it good, ten to twenty, until our numbers were nearly equal, and then we sallied out upon the hounds, and not a man of them ever got back to tell the fate of his party. Yes, yes; I was then young, and new to the sight of blood; and not relishing the thought that creatures who had spirits like myself should lay on the naked ground, to be torn asunder by beasts, or to bleach in the rains, I buried the dead with my own hands, under that very little hillock where you have placed yourselves; and no bad seat does it make neither, though it be raised by the bones of mortal men."

Heyward and the sisters arose, on the instant, from the grassy sepulchre; nor could the two latter, notwithstanding the terrific scenes they had so recently passed through, entirely suppress an emotion of natural horror, when they found themselves in such familiar contact with the grave of the dead Mohawks. The gray light, the gloomy little area of dark grass, surrounded by its border of brush, beyond which the pines rose, in breathing silence, apparently, into the very clouds, and the death-like stillness of the vast forest, were all in unison to deepen such a sensation.

"They are gone, and they are harmless," continued Hawkeye, waving his hand, with a melancholy smile, at their manifest alarm: "they'll never shout the war-whoop nor strike a blow with the tomahawk again! And of all those who aided in placing them where they lie, Chingachgook and I only are living! The brothers and family of the Mohican formed our war-party; and you see before you all that are now left of his race."

The eyes of the listeners involuntarily sought the forms of the Indians, with a compassionate interest in their desolate fortune. The dark persons were still to be seen within the shadows of the block-house, the son listening to the relation of his father with that sort of intenseness which would be created by a narrative that redounded so much to the honor of those whose names he had long revered for their courage and savage virtues.

"I had thought the Delawares a pacific people," said Duncan, "and that they never waged war in person; trusting the defence of their lands to those very Mohawks that you slew!"

"'Tis true in part," returned the scout, "and yet, at the bottom, 'tis a wicked lie. Such a treaty was made in ages gone by, through the deviltries of the Dutchers, who wished to disarm the natives that had the best right to the country where they had settled themselves. The Mohicans, though a part of the same nation, having to deal with the English, never entered into the silly bargain, but kept to their manhood; as in truth did the Delawares, when their eyes were opened to their folly. You see before you a chief of the great Mohican Sagamores! Once his family could chase their deer over tracts of country wider than that which belongs to the Albany Patteroon, without crossing brook or hill that was not their own; but what is left to their descendant! He may find his six feet of earth when God chooses, and keep it in peace, perhaps, if he has a friend who will take the pains to sink his head so low that the ploughshares cannot reach it!"

"Enough!" said Heyward, apprehensive that the subject might lead to a discussion that would interrupt the harmony so necessary to the preservation of his fair companions: "we have journeyed far, and few among us are blessed with forms like that of yours, which seems to know neither fatigue nor weakness."

"The sinews and bones of a man carry me through it all," said the hunter, surveying his muscular limbs with a simplicity that betrayed the honest pleasure the compliment afforded him: "there are larger and heavier men to be found in the settlements, but you might travel many days in a city before you could meet one able to walk fifty miles without stopping to take breath, or who has kept the hounds within hearing during a chase of hours. However, as flesh and blood are not always the same, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the gentle ones are willing to rest, after all they have seen and done this day. Uncas, clear out the spring, while your father and I make a cover for their tender heads of these



chestnut shoots, and a bed of grass and leaves.”

The dialogue ceased, while the hunter and his companions busied themselves in preparations for the comfort and protection of those they guided. A spring, which many long years before had induced the natives to select the place for their temporary fortification, was soon cleared of leaves, and a fountain of crystal gushed from the bed, diffusing its waters over the verdant hillock. A corner of the building was then roofed in such a manner as to exclude the heavy dew of the climate, and piles of sweet shrubs and dried leaves were laid beneath it for the sisters to repose on.

While the diligent woodsmen were employed in this manner, Cora and Alice partook of that refreshment which duty required much more than inclination prompted them to accept. They then retired within the walls, and first offering up their thanksgivings for past mercies, and petitioning for a continuance of the divine favor throughout the coming night, they laid their tender forms on the fragrant couch, and in spite of recollections and forebodings, soon sank into those slumbers which nature so imperiously demanded, and which were sweetened by hopes for the morrow. Duncan had prepared himself to pass the night in watchfulness near them, just without the ruin, but the scout, perceiving his intention, pointed towards Chingachgook, as he coolly disposed his own person on the grass, and said —

“The eyes of a white man are too heavy and too blind for such a watch as this! The Mohican will be our sentinel, therefore let us sleep.”

“I proved myself a sluggard on my post during the past night,” said Heyward, “and have less need of repose than you, who did more credit to the character of a soldier. Let all the party seek their rest, then, while I hold guard.”

“If we lay among the white tents of the 60th, and in front of an enemy like the French, I could not ask for a better watchman,” returned the scout; “but in the darkness and among the signs of the wilderness your judgment would be like the folly of a child, and your vigilance thrown away. Do then, like Uncas and myself, sleep, and sleep in safety.”

Heyward perceived, in truth, that the younger Indian had thrown his form on the side of the hillock while they were talking, like one who sought to make the most of the time allotted to rest, and that his example had been followed by David, whose voice literally “clove to his jaws,” with the fever of his wound, heightened, as it was, by their toilsome march. Unwilling to prolong a useless discussion, the young man affected to comply, by posting his back against the logs of the block-house, in a half-recumbent posture, though resolutely determined, in his own mind, not to close an eye until he had delivered his precious charge into the arms of Munro himself. Hawkeye, believing he had prevailed, soon fell asleep, and a silence as deep as the solitude in which they had found it, pervaded the retired spot.

For many minutes Duncan succeeded in keeping his senses on the alert, and alive to every moaning sound that arose from the forest. His vision became more acute as the shades of evening settled on the place; and even after the stars were glimmering above his head, he was able to distinguish the recumbent forms of his companions, as they lay stretched on the grass, and to note the person of Chingachgook, who sat upright and motionless as one of the trees which formed the dark barrier on every side. He still heard the gentle breathings of the sisters, who lay within a few feet of him, and not a leaf was ruffled by the passing air, of which his ear did not detect the whispering sound. At length, however, the mournful notes of a whippoorwill became blended with the moanings of an owl; his heavy eyes occasionally sought the bright rays of the stars, and then he fancied he saw them through the fallen lids. At instants of momentary wakefulness he mistook a bush for his associate sentinel; his head next sank upon his shoulder, which, in its turn, sought the support of the ground; and, finally, his whole person become relaxed and pliant, and the young man sank into a deep sleep, dreaming that he was a knight of ancient chivalry, holding his midnight vigils before the tent of a recaptured princess, whose favor he did not despair of gaining, by such a proof of devotion and watchfulness.

How long the tired Duncan lay in this insensible state he never knew himself, but his slumbering visions had been long lost in total forgetfulness, when he was awakened by a light tap on the shoulder. Aroused by this signal, slight as it was, he sprang upon his feet with a confused recollection of the self-imposed duty he had assumed with the commencement of the night.

“Who comes?” he demanded, feeling for his sword at the place where it was usually suspended, “Speak! friend or enemy?”

“Friend,” replied the low voice of Chingachgook; who, pointing upwards at the luminary which was shedding its mild light through the opening in the trees, directly in their bivouac, immediately added, in his rude English, “moon comes, and white man’s fort far — far off; time to move, when sleep shuts both eyes of the Frenchman!”

"You say true! call up your friends, and bridle the horses, while I prepare my own companions for the march!"

"We are awake, Duncan," said the soft, silvery tones of Alice within the building, "and ready to travel very fast after so refreshing a sleep; but you have watched through the tedious night in our behalf, after having endured so much fatigue the live-long day!"

"Say, rather, I would have watched, but my treacherous eyes betrayed me; twice have I proved myself unfit for the trust I bear."

"Nay, Duncan, deny it not," interrupted the smiling Alice, issuing from the shadows of the building into the light of the moon, in all the loveliness of her freshened beauty; "I know you to be a heedless one, when self is the object of your care, and but too vigilant in favor of others. Can we not tarry here a little longer, while you find the rest you need? Cheerfully, most cheerfully, will Cora and I keep the vigils, while you, and all these brave men, endeavor to snatch a little sleep!"

"If shame could cure me of my drowsiness, I should never close an eye again," said the uneasy youth, gazing at the ingenuous countenance of Alice, where, however, in its sweet solicitude, he read nothing to confirm his half awakened suspicion. "It is but too true, that after leading you into danger by my heedlessness, I have not even the merit of guarding your pillows as should become a soldier."

"No one but Duncan himself should accuse Duncan of such a weakness. Go, then, and sleep; believe me, neither of us, weak girls as we are, will betray our watch."

The young man was relieved from the awkwardness of making any further protestations of his own demerits, by an exclamation from Chingachgook, and the attitude of riveted attention assumed by his son.

"The Mohicans hear an enemy!" whispered Hawkeye, who, by this time, in common with the whole party, was awake and stirring. "They scent danger in the wind!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Heyward. "Surely we have had enough of bloodshed!"

While he spoke, however, the young soldier seized his rifle, and advancing towards the front, prepared to atone for his venial remissness, by freely exposing his life in defence of those he attended.

"'Tis some creature of the forest prowling around us in quest of food," he said, in a whisper, as soon as the low, and apparently distant sounds, which had startled the Mohicans, reached his own ears.

"Hist!" returned the attentive scout; "'tis man; even I can now tell his tread, poor as my senses are when compared to an Indian's! That scampering Huron has fallen in with one of Montcalm's outlying parties, and they have struck upon our trail. I shouldn't like, myself, to spill more human blood in this spot," he added, looking around with anxiety in his features, at the dim objects by which he was surrounded; "but what must be, must! Lead the horses into the block-house, Uncas; and, friends, do you follow to the same shelter. Poor and old as it is, it offers a cover, and has rung with the crack of a rifle afore to-night!"

He was instantly obeyed, the Mohicans leading the Narragansetts within the ruin, whither the whole party repaired with the most guarded silence.

The sounds of approaching footsteps were now too distinctly audible to leave any doubts as to the nature of the interruption. They were soon mingled with voices calling to each other in an Indian dialect, which the hunter, in a whisper, affirmed to Heyward was the language of the Hurons. When the party reached the point where the horses had entered the thicket which surrounded the block-house, they were evidently at fault, having lost those marks which, until that moment, had directed their pursuit.

It would seem by the voices that twenty men were soon collected at that one spot, mingling their different opinions and advice in noisy clamor.

"The knaves know our weakness," whispered Hawkeye, who stood by the side of Heyward, in deep shade, looking through an opening in the logs, "or they wouldn't indulge their idleness in such a squaw's march. Listen to the reptiles! each man among them seems to have two tongues, and but a single leg."

Duncan, brave as he was in the combat, could not, in such a moment of painful suspense, make any reply to the cool and characteristic remark of the scout. He only grasped his rifle more firmly, and fastened his eyes upon the narrow opening, through which he gazed upon the moonlight view with increasing anxiety. The deeper tones of one who spoke as having authority were next heard, amid a silence that denoted the respect with which his orders, or rather advice, was

received. After which, by the rustling of leaves, and cracking of dried twigs, it was apparent the savages were separating in pursuit of the lost trail. Fortunately for the pursued, the light of the moon, while it shed a flood of mild lustre upon the little area around the ruin, was not sufficiently strong to penetrate the deep arches of the forest, where the objects still lay in deceptive shadow. The search proved fruitless; for so short and sudden had been the passage from the faint path the travellers had journeyed into the thicket, that every trace of their footsteps was lost in the obscurity of the woods.

It was not long, however, before the restless savages were heard beating the brush, and gradually approaching the inner edge of that dense border of young chestnuts which encircled the little area.

"They are coming," muttered Heyward, endeavoring to thrust his rifle through the chink in the logs; "let us fire on their approach."

"Keep everything in the shade," returned the scout; "the snapping of a flint, or even the smell of a single karnel of the brimstone, would bring the hungry varlets upon us in a body. Should it please God that we must give battle for the scalps, trust to the experience of men who know the ways of the savages, and who are not often backward when the war-whoop is howled."

Duncan cast his eyes behind him, and saw that the trembling sisters were cowering in the far corner of the building, while the Mohicans stood in the shadow, like two upright posts, ready, and apparently willing, to strike when the blow should be needed. Curbing his impatience, he again looked out upon the area, and awaited the result in silence. At that instant the thicket opened, and a tall and armed Huron advanced a few paces into the open space. As he gazed upon the silent block-house, the moon fell upon his swarthy countenance, and betrayed its surprise and curiosity. He made the exclamation which usually accompanies the former emotion in an Indian, and, calling in a low voice, soon drew a companion to his side.

These children of the woods stood together for several moments pointing at the crumbling edifice, and conversing in the unintelligible language of their tribe. They then approached, though with slow and cautious steps, pausing every instant to look at the building, like startled deer, whose curiosity struggled powerfully with their awakened apprehensions for the mastery. The foot of one of them suddenly rested on the mound, and he stooped to examine its nature. At this moment, Heyward observed that the scout loosened his knife in his sheath, and lowered the muzzle of his rifle. Imitating these movements, the young man prepared himself for the struggle, which now seemed inevitable.

The savages were so near, that the least motion in one of the horses, or even a breath louder than common, would have betrayed the fugitives. But, in discovering the character of the mound, the attention of the Hurons appeared directed to a different object. They spoke together, and the sounds of their voices were low and solemn, as if influenced by a reverence that was deeply blended with awe. Then they drew warily back, keeping their eyes riveted on the ruin, as if they expected to see the apparitions of the dead issue from its silent walls, until having reached the boundary of the area, they moved slowly into the thicket, and disappeared.

Hawkeye dropped the breech of his rifle to the earth, and drawing a long, free breath, exclaimed, in an audible whisper —

"Ay! they respect the dead, and it has this time saved their own lives, and, it may be, the lives of better men too."

Heyward lent his attention for a single moment to his companion, but without replying, he again turned towards those who just then interested him more. He heard the two Hurons leave the bushes, and it was soon plain that all the pursuers were gathered about them, in deep attention to their report. After a few minutes of earnest and solemn dialogue, altogether different from the noisy clamor with which they had first collected about the spot, the sounds grew fainter and more distant, and finally were lost in the depths of the forest.

Hawkeye waited until a signal from the listening Chingachgook assured him that every sound from the retiring party was completely swallowed by the distance, when he motioned to Heyward to lead forth the horses, and to assist the sisters into their saddles. The instant this was done, they issued through the broken gateway, and stealing out by a direction opposite to the one by which they had entered, they quitted the spot, the sisters casting furtive glances at the silent grave and crumbling ruin, as they left the soft light of the moon, to bury themselves in the gloom of the woods.



## CHAPTER 14

"GUARD.— *Qui est là?*

PUC.— *Paisans, pauvres gens de France.*"

—KING HENRY VI.

During the rapid movement from the block-house, and until the party was deeply buried in the forest, each individual was too much interested in the escape to hazard a word even in whispers. The scout resumed his post in the advance, though his steps, after he had thrown a safe distance between himself and his enemies, were more deliberate than in their previous march, in consequence of his utter ignorance of the localities of the surrounding woods. More than once he halted to consult with his confederates, the Mohicans, pointing upwards at the moon, and examining the barks of the trees with care. In these brief pauses, Heyward and the sisters listened, with senses rendered doubly acute by the danger, to detect any symptoms which might announce the proximity of their foes. At such moments, it seemed as if a vast range of country lay buried in eternal sleep; not the least sound arising from the forest, unless it was the distant and scarcely audible rippling of a water-course. Birds, beasts, and man, appeared to slumber alike, if, indeed, any of the latter were to be found in that wide tract of wilderness. But the sounds of the rivulet, feeble and murmuring as they were, relieved the guides at once from no trifling embarrassment, and towards it they immediately held their way.

When the banks of the little stream were gained, Hawkeye made another halt; and, taking the moccasins from his feet, he invited Heyward and Gamut to follow his example. He then entered the water, and for near an hour they travelled in the bed of the brook, leaving no trail. The moon had already sunk into an immense pile of black clouds, which lay impending above the western horizon, when they issued from the low and devious water-course to rise again to the light and level of the sandy but wooded plain. Here the scout seemed to be once more at home, for he held on his way with the certainty and diligence of a man who moved in the security of his own knowledge. The path soon became more uneven, and the travellers could plainly perceive that the mountains drew nigher to them on each hand, and that they were, in truth, about entering one of their gorges. Suddenly, Hawkeye made a pause, and waiting until he was joined by the whole party, he spoke, though in tones so low and cautious, that they added to the solemnity of his words, in the quiet and darkness of the place.

"It is easy to know the pathways, and to find the licks and water-courses of the wilderness," he said; "but who that saw this spot could venture to say, that a mighty army was at rest among yonder silent trees and barren mountains?"

"We are then at no great distance from William Henry?" said Heyward, advancing nigher to the scout.

"It is yet a long and weary path, and when and where to strike it, is now our greatest difficulty. See," he said, pointing through the trees towards a spot where a little basin of water reflected the stars from its placid bosom, "here is the 'bloody pond'; and I am on the ground that I have not only often travelled, but over which I have fought the enemy, from the rising to the setting sun."

"Ha! that sheet of dull and dreary water, then, is the sepulchre of the brave men who fell in the contest. I have heard it named, but never have I stood on its banks before."

"Three battles did we make with the Dutch-Frenchman<sup>20</sup> in a day," continued Hawkeye, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, rather than replying to the remark of Duncan. "He met us hard by, in our outward march to ambush his advance, and scattered us, like driven deer, through the defile, to the shores of Horican. Then we rallied behind our fallen trees, and made head against him, under Sir William — who was made Sir William for that very deed; and well did we pay him for the disgrace of the morning! Hundreds of Frenchmen saw the sun that day for the last time; and even the leader, Dieskau himself, fell into our hands so cut and torn with the lead, that he has gone back to his own country, unfit for further acts in war."

<sup>20</sup> Baron Dieskau, a German, in the service of France. A few years previous to the period of the tale, this officer was defeated by Sir William Johnson of Johnstown, New York, on the shores of Lake George. See Appendix, Note H.

"'Twas a noble repulse!" exclaimed Heyward, in the heat of his youthful ardor; "the fame of it reached us early, in our southern army."

"Ay! but it did not end there. I was sent by Major Effingham, at Sir William's own bidding, to outflank the French, and carry the tidings of their disaster across the portage, to the fort on the Hudson. Just hereaway, where you see the trees rise

into a mountain swell, I met a party coming down to our aid, and I led them where the enemy were taking their meal, little dreaming that they had not finished the bloody work of the day.”

“And you surprised them?”

“If death can be a surprise to men who are thinking only of the cravings of their appetites. We gave them but little breathing time, for they had borne hard upon us in the fight of the morning, and there were few in our party who had not lost friend or relative by their hands. When all was over, the dead, and some say the dying, were cast into that little pond. These eyes have seen its waters colored with blood, as natural water never yet flowed from the bowels of the ‘arth.’”

“It was a convenient, and, I trust, will prove a peaceful grave for a soldier. You have, then, seen much service on this frontier?”

“I!” said the scout, erecting his tall person with an air of military pride; “there are not many echoes among these hills that haven’t rung with the crack of my rifle, nor is there the space of a square mile atwixt Horican and the river, that ‘Killdeer’ hasn’t dropped a living body on, be it an enemy or be it a brute beast. As for the grave, there, being as quiet as you mention, it is another matter. There are them in the camp who say and think, man, to lie still, should not be buried while the breath is in the body; and certain it is that in the hurry of that evening, the doctors had but little time to say who was living and who was dead. Hist! see you nothing walking on the shore of the pond?”

“Tis not probable that any are as houseless as ourselves, in this dreary forest.”

“Such as he may care but little for house or shelter, and night dew can never wet a body that passes its days in the water,” returned the scout, grasping the shoulder of Heyward with such convulsive strength as to make the young soldier painfully sensible how much superstitious terror had got the mastery of a man usually so dauntless.

“By heaven! there is a human form, and it approaches! Stand to your arms, my friends; for we know not whom we encounter.”

“Qui vive?” demanded a stern, quick voice, which sounded like a challenge from another world, issuing out of that solitary and solemn place.

“What says it?” whispered the scout; “it speaks neither Indian nor English!”

“Qui vive?” repeated the same voice, which was quickly followed by the rattling of arms, and a menacing attitude.

“France!” cried Heyward, advancing from the shadow of the trees to the shore of the pond, within a few yards of the sentinel.

“D’où venez-vous — où allez-vous, d’aussi bonne heure?” demanded the grenadier, in the language and with the accent of a man from old France.

“Je viens de là découverte, et je vais me coucher.”

“Etes-vous officier du roi?”

“Sans doute, mon camarade; me prends-tu pour un provincial! Je suis capitaine de chasseurs (Heyward well knew that the other was of a regiment in the line); j’ai ici, avec moi, les filles du commandant de là fortification. Aha! tu en as entendu parler! je les ai fait prisonnières près de l’autre fort, et je les conduis au général.”

“Ma foi! mesdames; j’en suis fâché pour vous,” exclaimed the young soldier, touching his cap with grace; “mais — fortune de guerre! vous trouverez notre général un brave homme, et bien poli avec les dames.”

“C’est le caractère des gens de guerre,” said Cora, with admirable self-possession. “Adieu, mon ami; je vous souhaiterais un devoir plus agréable à remplir.”

The soldier made a low and humble acknowledgment for her civility; and Heyward adding a “Bonne nuit, mon camarade,” they moved deliberately forward, leaving the sentinel pacing the banks of the silent pond, little suspecting an enemy of so much effrontery, and humming to himself those words, which were recalled to his mind by the sight of women, and perhaps by recollections of his own distant and beautiful France —

“Vive le vin, l’amour,” etc., etc.

“Tis well you understood the knave!” whispered the scout, when they had gained a little distance from the place, and letting his rifle fall into the hollow of his arm again; “I soon saw that he was one of them uneasy Frenchers; and well for him it was that his speech was friendly and his wishes kind, or a place might have been found for his bones among those of

his countrymen.”

He was interrupted by a long and heavy groan which arose from the little basin, as though, in truth, the spirits of the departed lingered about their watery sepulchre.

“Surely it was of flesh!” continued the scout; “no spirit could handle its arms so steadily!”

“It *was* of flesh; but whether the poor fellow still belongs to this world may well be doubted,” said Heyward, glancing his eyes around him, and missing Chingachgook from their little band. Another groan more faint than the former, was succeeded by a heavy and sullen plunge into the water, and all was as still again as if the borders of the dreary pool had never been awakened from the silence of creation. While they yet hesitated in uncertainty, the form of the Indian was seen gliding out of the thicket. As the chief rejoined them, with one hand he attached the reeking scalp of the unfortunate young Frenchman to his girdle, and with the other he replaced the knife and tomahawk that had drunk his blood. He then took his wonted station, with the air of a man who believed he had done a deed of merit.

The scout dropped one end of his rifle to the earth, and leaning his hands on the other, he stood musing in profound silence. Then shaking his head in a mournful manner, he muttered —

“‘T would have been a cruel and an unhuman act for a white-skin; but ’tis the gift and natur’ of an Indian, and I suppose it should not be denied. I could wish, though, it had befallen an accursed Mingo, rather than that gay young boy from the old countries.”

“Enough!” said Heyward, apprehensive the unconscious sisters might comprehend the nature of the detention, and conquering his disgust by a train of reflections very much like that of the hunter; “’tis done; and though better it were left undone, cannot be amended. You see we are, too obviously, within the sentinels of the enemy; what course do you propose to follow?”

“Yes,” said Hawkeye, rousing himself again, “’tis as you say, too late to harbor further thoughts about it. Ay, the French have gathered around the fort in good earnest, and we have a delicate needle to thread in passing them.”

“And but little time to do it in,” added Heyward, glancing his eyes upward, toward the bank of vapor that concealed the setting moon.

“And little time to do it in!” repeated the scout. “The thing may be done in two fashions, by the help of Providence, without which it may not be done at all.”

“Name them quickly, for time presses.”

“One would be to dismount the gentle ones, and let their beasts range the plain; by sending the Mohicans in front, we might then cut a lane through their sentries, and enter the fort over the dead bodies.”

“It will not do — it will not do!” interrupted the generous Heyward; “a soldier might force his way in this manner, but never with such a convoy.”

“‘T would be, indeed, a bloody path for tender feet to wade in,” returned the equally reluctant scout; “but I thought it befitting my manhood to name it. We must then turn on our trail and get without the line of their look-outs, when we will bend short to the west, and enter the mountains; where I can hide you, so that all the devil’s hounds in Montcalm’s pay would be thrown off the scent, for months to come.”

“Let it be done, and that instantly.”

Further words were unnecessary; for Hawkeye, merely uttering the mandate to “follow,” moved along the route by which they had just entered their present critical and even dangerous situation. Their progress, like their late dialogue, was guarded, and without noise; for none knew at what moment a passing patrol, or a crouching picket of the enemy, might rise upon their path. As they held their silent way along the margin of the pond, again Heyward and the scout stole furtive glances at its appalling dreariness. They looked in vain for the form they had so recently seen stalking along its silent shores, while a low and regular wash of the little waves, by announcing that the waters were not yet subsided, furnished a frightful memorial of the deed of blood they had just witnessed. Like all that passing and gloomy scene, the low basin, however, quickly melted in the darkness, and became blended with the mass of black objects in the rear of the travellers.

Hawkeye soon deviated from the line of their retreat, and striking off towards the mountains which form the western boundary of the narrow plain, he led his followers, with swift steps, deep within the shadows that were cast from their high and broken summits. The route was now painful; lying over ground ragged with rocks, and intersected with ravines, and

their progress proportionately slow. Bleak and black hills lay on every side of them, compensating in some degree for the additional toil of the march, by the sense of security they imparted. At length the party began slowly to climb a steep and rugged ascent by a path that curiously wound among rocks and trees, avoiding the one, and supported by the other, in a manner that showed it had been devised by men long practised in the arts of the wilderness. As they gradually rose from the level of the valleys, the thick darkness which usually precedes the approach of day began to disperse, and objects were seen in the plain and palpable colors with which they had been gifted by nature. When they issued from the stunted woods which clung to the barren sides of the mountain, upon a flat and mossy rock that formed its summit, they met the morning, as it came blushing above the green pines of a hill that lay on the opposite side of the valley of the Horican.

The scout now told the sisters to dismount; and taking the bridles from the mouths, and the saddles off the backs of the jaded beasts, he turned them loose, to glean a scanty subsistence among the shrubs and meagre herbage of that elevated region.

“Go,” he said, “and seek your food where natur’ gives it you; and beware that you become not food to ravenous wolves yourselves, among these hills.”

“Have we no further need of them?” demanded Heyward.

“See, and judge with your own eyes,” said the scout, advancing towards the eastern brow of the mountain, whither he beckoned for the whole party to follow; “if it was as easy to look into the heart of man as it is to spy out the nakedness of Montcalm’s camp from this spot, hypocrites would grow scarce, and the cunning of a Mingo might prove a losing game, compared to the honesty of a Delaware.”

When the travellers reached the verge of the precipice, they saw, at a glance, the truth of the scout’s declaration, and the admirable foresight with which he had led them to their commanding station.

The mountain on which they stood, elevated, perhaps, a thousand feet in the air, was a high cone that rose a little in advance of that range which stretches for miles along the western shores of the lake, until meeting its sister piles, beyond the water, it ran off towards the Canadas, in confused and broken masses of rock, thinly sprinkled with evergreens. Immediately at the feet of the party, the southern shore of the Horican swept in a broad semicircle, from mountain to mountain, marking a wide strand, that soon rose into an uneven and somewhat elevated plain. To the north stretched the limpid, and, as it appeared from that dizzy height, the narrow sheet of the “holy lake,” indented with numberless bays, embellished by fantastic headlands, and dotted with countless islands. At the distance of a few leagues, the bed of the waters became lost among mountains, or was wrapped in the masses of vapor that came slowly rolling along their bosom, before a light morning air. But a narrow opening between the crests of the hills pointed out the passage by which they found their way still farther north, to spread their pure and ample sheets again, before pouring out their tribute into the distant Champlain. To the south stretched the defile, or rather broken plain, so often mentioned. For several miles in this direction, the mountains appeared reluctant to yield their dominion, but within reach of the eye they diverged, and finally melted into the level and sandy lands, across which we have accompanied our adventurers in their double journey. Along both ranges of hills, which bounded the opposite sides of the lake and valley, clouds of light vapor were rising in spiral wreaths from the uninhabited woods, looking like the smokes of hidden cottages; or rolled lazily down the declivities, to mingle with the fogs of the lower land. A single, solitary, snow-white cloud floated above the valley, and marked the spot beneath which lay the silent pool of the “bloody pond.”

Directly on the shore of the lake, and nearer to its western than to its eastern margin, lay the extensive earthen ramparts and low buildings of William Henry. Two of the sweeping bastions appeared to rest on the water which washed their bases, while a deep ditch and extensive morasses guarded its other sides and angles. The land had been cleared of wood for a reasonable distance around the work, but every other part of the scene lay in the green livery of nature, except where the limpid water mellowed the view, or the bold rocks thrust their black and naked heads above the undulating outline of the mountain ranges. In its front might be seen the scattered sentinels, who held a weary watch against their numerous foes; and within the walls themselves, the travellers looked down upon men still drowsy with a night of vigilance. Towards the southeast, but in immediate contact with the fort, was an entrenched camp, posted on a rocky eminence, that would have been far more eligible for the work itself, in which Hawkeye pointed out the presence of those auxiliary regiments that had so recently left the Hudson in their company. From the woods, a little farther to the south, rose numerous dark and lurid smokes, that were easily to be distinguished from the purer exhalations of the springs, and which the scout also showed to Heyward, as evidences that the enemy lay in force in that direction.

But the spectacle which most concerned the young soldier was on the western bank of the lake, though quite near to its southern termination. On a strip of land, which appeared, from his stand, too narrow to contain such an army, but which, in truth, extended many hundreds of yards from the shores of the Horican to the base of the mountain, were to be seen the white tents and military engines of an encampment of ten thousand men. Batteries were already thrown up in their front, and even while the spectators above them were looking down, with such different emotions, on a scene which lay like a map beneath their feet, the roar of artillery rose from the valley, and passed off in thundering echoes, along the eastern hills.

"Morning is just touching them below," said the deliberate and musing scout, "and the watchers have a mind to wake up the sleepers by the sound of cannon. We are a few hours too late? Montcalm has already filled the woods with his accursed Iroquois."

"The place is, indeed, invested," returned Duncan, "but is there no expedient by which we may enter? capture in the works would be far preferable to falling again into the hands of roving Indians."

"See!" exclaimed the scout, unconsciously directing the attention of Cora to the quarters of her own father, "how that shot has made the stones fly from the side of the commandant's house! Ay! these Frenchers will pull it to pieces faster than it was put together, solid and thick though it be."

"Heyward, I sicken at the sight of danger that I cannot share," said the undaunted, but anxious daughter. "Let us go to Montcalm, and demand admission: he dare not deny a child the boon."

"You would scarce find the tent of the Frenchman with the hair on your head," said the blunt scout. "If I had but one of the thousand boats which lie empty along that shore, it might be done. Ha! here will soon be an end of the firing, for yonder comes a fog that will turn day to night, and make an Indian arrow more dangerous than a moulded cannon. Now, if you are equal to the work, and will follow, I will make a push; for I long to get down into that camp, if it be only to scatter some Mingo dogs that I see lurking in the skirts of yonder thicket of birch."

"We are equal," said Cora, firmly: "on such an errand we will follow to any danger."

The scout turned to her with a smile of honest and cordial approbation as he answered —

"I would I had a thousand men, of brawny limbs and quick eyes, that feared death as little as you! I'd send them jabbering Frenchers back into their den again, afore the week was ended, howling like so many fettered hounds or hungry wolves. But stir," he added, turning from her to the rest of the party, "the fog comes rolling down so fast, we shall have but just the time to meet it on the plain, and use it as a cover. Remember, if any accident should befall me, to keep the air blowing on your left cheeks — or rather, follow the Mohicans; they'd scent their way, be it in day or be it at night."

He then waved his hand for them to follow, and threw himself down the steep declivity, with free, but careful footsteps. Heyward assisted the sisters to descend, and in a few minutes they were all far down a mountain whose sides they had climbed with so much toil and pain.

The direction taken by Hawkeye soon brought the travellers to the level of the plain, nearly opposite to a sally-port in the western curtain of the fort, which lay, itself, at the distance of about half a mile from the point where he halted to allow Duncan to come up with his charge. In their eagerness, and favored by the nature of the ground, they had anticipated the fog, which was rolling heavily down the lake, and it became necessary to pause, until the mists had wrapped the camp of the enemy in their fleecy mantle. The Mohicans profited by the delay, to steal out of the woods, and to make a survey of surrounding objects. They were followed at a little distance by the scout, with a view to profit early by their report, and to obtain some faint knowledge for himself of the more immediate localities.

In a very few moments he returned, his face reddened with vexation, while he muttered his disappointment in words of no very gentle import.

"Here has the cunning Frenchman been posting a picket directly in our path," he said; "redskins and whites; and we shall be as likely to fall into their midst as to pass them in the fog!"

"Cannot we make a circuit to avoid the danger," asked Heyward, "and come into our path again when it is passed?"

"Who that once bends from the line of his march in a fog can tell when or how to turn to find it again! The mists of Horican are not like the curls from a peace-pipe, or the smoke which settles above a mosquito fire."

He was yet speaking, when a crashing sound was heard, and a cannon-ball entered the thicket, striking the body of a sapling, and rebounding to the earth, its force being much expended by previous resistance. The Indians followed instantly



like busy attendants on the terrible messenger, and Uncas commenced speaking earnestly and with much action, in the Delaware tongue.

"It may be so, lad," muttered the scout, when he had ended; "for desperate fevers are not to be treated like a toothache. Come, then, the fog is shutting in."

"Stop!" cried Heyward; "first explain your expectations."

"Tis soon done, and a small hope it is; but it is better than nothing. This shot that you see," added the scout, kicking the harmless iron with his foot, "has ploughed the 'arth in its road from the fort, and we shall hunt for the furrow it has made, when all other signs may fail. No more words, but follow, or the fog may leave us in the middle of our path, a mark for both armies to shoot at."

Heyward perceiving that, in fact, a crisis had arrived when acts were more required than words, placed himself between the sisters, and drew them swiftly forward, keeping the dim figure of their leader in his eye. It was soon apparent that Hawkeye had not magnified the power of the fog, for before they had proceeded twenty yards, it was difficult for the different individuals of the party to distinguish each other, in the vapor.

They had made their little circuit to the left, and were already inclining again towards the right, having, as Heyward thought, got over nearly half the distance to the friendly works, when his ears were saluted with the fierce summons, apparently within twenty feet of them, of —

"Qui va là?"

"Push on!" whispered the scout, once more bending to the left.

"Push on!" repeated Heyward; when the summons was renewed by a dozen voices, each of which seemed charged with menace.

"C'est moi," cried Duncan, dragging, rather than leading those he supported, swiftly onward.

"Bête! — qui? — moi!"

"Ami de là France."

"Tu m'as plus l'air d'un *ennemi* de là France; arrête! où pardieu je te ferai ami du diable. Non! feu, camarades, feu!"

The order was instantly obeyed, and the fog was stirred by the explosion of fifty muskets. Happily, the aim was bad, and the bullets cut the air in a direction a little different from that taken by the fugitives; though still so nigh them, that to the unpractised ears of David and the two females, it appeared as if they whistled within a few inches of the organs. The outcry was renewed, and the order, not only to fire again, but to pursue, was too plainly audible. When Heyward briefly explained the meaning of the words they heard, Hawkeye halted, and spoke with quick decision and great firmness.

"Let us deliver our fire," he said; "they will believe it a sortie, and give way, or they will wait for reinforcements."

The scheme was well conceived, but failed in its effect. The instant the French heard the pieces, it seemed as if the plain was alive with men, muskets rattling along its whole extent, from the shores of the lake to the farthest boundary of the woods.

"We shall draw their entire army upon us, and bring on a general assault," said Duncan: "lead on, my friend, for your own life, and ours."

The scout seemed willing to comply; but, in the hurry of the moment, and in the change of position, he had lost the direction. In vain he turned either cheek towards the light air; they felt equally cool. In this dilemma, Uncas lighted on the furrow of the cannon-ball, where it had cut the ground in three adjacent ant-hills.

"Give me the range!" said Hawkeye, bending to catch a glimpse of the direction, and then instantly moving onward.

Cries, oaths, voices calling to each other, and the reports of muskets, were now quick and incessant, and, apparently, on every side of them. Suddenly, a strong glare of light flashed across the scene, the fog rolled upwards in thick wreaths, and several cannon belched across the plain, and the roar was thrown heavily back from the bellowing echoes of the mountain.

"Tis from the fort!" exclaimed Hawkeye, turning short on his tracks; "and we, like stricken fools, were rushing to the woods, under the very knives of the Maquas."

The instant their mistake was rectified, the whole party retraced the error with the utmost diligence. Duncan willingly relinquished the support of Cora to the arm of Uncas, and Cora as readily accepted the welcome assistance. Men, hot and

angry in pursuit, were evidently on their footsteps, and each instant threatened their capture, if not their destruction.

“Point de quartier aux coquins!” cried an eager pursuer, who seemed to direct the operations of the enemy.

“Stand firm, and be ready, my gallant 60ths!” suddenly exclaimed a voice above them; “wait to see the enemy — fire low, and sweep the glacis.”

“Father! father!” exclaimed a piercing cry from out the mist; “it is I! Alice! thy own Elsie! spare, O! save your daughters!”

“Hold!” shouted the former speaker, in the awful tones of parental agony, the sound reaching even to the woods, and rolling back in solemn echo. “’Tis she! God has restored me my children! Throw open the sally-port; to the field, 60ths, to the field; pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs! Drive off these dogs of France with your steel.”

Duncan heard the grating of the rusty hinges, and darting to the spot, directed by the sound, he met a long line of dark red warriors, passing swiftly towards the glacis. He knew them for his own battalion of the royal Americans, and flying to their head, soon swept every trace of his pursuers from before the works.

For an instant, Cora and Alice had stood trembling and bewildered by this unexpected desertion; but, before either had leisure for speech, or even thought, an officer of gigantic frame whose locks were bleached with years and service, but whose air of military grandeur had been rather softened than destroyed by time, rushed out of the body of the mist, and folded them to his bosom, while large scalding tears rolled down his pale and wrinkled cheeks, and he exclaimed, in the peculiar accent of Scotland —

“For this I thank thee, Lord! Let danger come as it will, thy servant is now prepared!”



## CHAPTER 15

*"Then go we in, to know his embassy;  
Which I could, with ready guess, declare,  
Before the Frenchman speak a word of it."*

—KING HENRY V.

A few succeeding days were passed amid the privations, the uproar, and the dangers of the siege, which was vigorously pressed by a power against whose approaches Munro possessed no competent means of resistance. It appeared as if Webb, with his army, which lay slumbering on the banks of the Hudson, had utterly forgotten the strait to which his countrymen were reduced. Montcalm had filled the woods of the portage with his savages, every yell and whoop from whom rang through the British encampment, chilling the hearts of men who were already but too much disposed to magnify the danger.

Not so, however, with the besieged. Animated by the words, and stimulated by the examples, of their leaders, they had found their courage, and maintained their ancient reputation, with zeal that did justice to the stern character of their commander. As if satisfied with the toil of marching through the wilderness to encounter his enemy, the French general, though of approved skill, had neglected to seize the adjacent mountains; whence the besieged might have been exterminated with impunity, and which, in the more modern warfare of the country, would not have been neglected for a single hour. This sort of contempt for eminences, or rather dread of the labor of ascending them, might have been termed the besetting weakness of the warfare of the period. It originated in the simplicity of the Indian contests, in which, from the nature of the combats, and the density of the forests, fortresses were rare, and artillery next to useless. The carelessness engendered by these usages descended even to the war of the Revolution, and lost the States the important fortress of Ticonderoga, opening a way for the army of Burgoyne into what was then the bosom of the country. We look back at this ignorance, or infatuation, whichever it may be called, with wonder, knowing that the neglect of an eminence, whose difficulties, like those of Mount Defiance, have been so greatly exaggerated, would, at the present time, prove fatal to the reputation of the engineer who had planned the works at their base, or to that of the general whose lot it was to defend them.

The tourist, the valetudinarian, or the amateur of the beauties of nature, who, in the train of his four-in-hand, now rolls through the scenes we have attempted to describe, in quest of information, health, or pleasure, or floats steadily towards his object on those artificial waters which have sprung up under the administration of a statesman<sup>21</sup> who has dared to stake his political character on the hazardous issue, is not to suppose that his ancestors traversed those hills, or struggled with the same currents with equal facility. The transportation of a single heavy gun was often considered equal to a victory gained; if, happily, the difficulties of the passage had not so far separated it from its necessary concomitant, the ammunition, as to render it no more than an useless tube of unwieldy iron.

<sup>21</sup> Evidently the late De Witt Clinton, who died governor of New York in 1828.

The evils of this state of things pressed heavily on the fortunes of the resolute Scotsman who now defended William Henry. Though his adversary neglected the hills, he had planted his batteries with judgment on the plain, and caused them to be served with vigor and skill. Against this assault, the besieged could only oppose the imperfect and hasty preparations of a fortress in the wilderness.

It was in the afternoon of the fifth day of the siege, and the fourth of his own service in it, that Major Heyward profited by a parley that had just been beaten, by repairing to the ramparts of one of the water bastions, to breathe the cool air from the lake, and to take a survey of the progress of the siege. He was alone, if the solitary sentinel who paced the mound be excepted; for the artillerists had hastened also to profit by the temporary suspension of their arduous duties. The evening was delightfully calm, and the light air from the limpid water fresh and soothing. It seemed as if, with the termination to the roar of artillery and the plunging of shot, nature had also seized the moment to assume her mildest and most captivating form. The sun poured down his parting glory on the scene, without the oppression of those fierce rays that belong to the climate and the season. The mountains looked green and fresh and lovely; tempered with the milder light, or softened in shadow, as thin vapors floated between them and the sun. The numerous islands rested on the bosom of the

Horican, some low and sunken, as if imbedded in the waters, and others appearing to hover above the element, in little hillocks of green velvet; among which the fishermen of the beleaguering army peacefully rowed their skiffs, or floated at rest on the glassy mirror, in quiet pursuit of their employment.

The scene was at once animated and still. All that pertained to nature was sweet, or simply grand; while those parts which depended on the temper and movements of man were lively and playful.

Two little spotless flags were abroad, the one on a salient angle of the fort, and the other on the advanced battery of the besiegers; emblems of the truce which existed, not only to the acts, but it would seem, also, to the enmity of the combatants.

Behind these, again, swung, heavily opening and closing in silken folds, the rival standards of England and France.

A hundred gay and thoughtless young Frenchmen were drawing a net to the pebbly beach, within dangerous proximity to the sullen but silent cannon of the fort, while the eastern mountain was sending back the loud shouts and gay merriment that attended their sport. Some were rushing eagerly to enjoy the aquatic games of the lake, and others were already toiling their way up the neighboring hills, with the restless curiosity of their nation. To all these sports and pursuits, those of the enemy who watched the besieged, and the besieged themselves, were, however, merely the idle, though sympathizing spectators. Here and there a picket had, indeed, raised a song, or mingled in a dance, which had drawn the dusky savages around them, from their lairs in the forest. In short, everything wore rather the appearance of a day of pleasure, than of an hour stolen from the dangers and toil of a bloody and vindictive warfare.

Duncan had stood in a musing attitude, contemplating this scene a few minutes, when his eyes were directed to the glacia in front of the sally-port already mentioned, by the sounds of approaching footsteps. He walked to an angle of the bastion, and beheld the scout advancing, under the custody of a French officer, to the body of the fort. The countenance of Hawkeye was haggard and careworn, and his air dejected, as though he felt the deepest degradation at having fallen into the power of his enemies. He was without his favorite weapon, and his arms were even bound behind him with thongs, made of the skin of a deer. The arrival of flags, to cover the messengers of summons, had occurred so often of late, that when Heyward first threw his careless glance on this group, he expected to see another of the officers of the enemy, charged with a similar office; but the instant he recognized the tall person, and still sturdy, though downcast features of his friend the woodsman, he started with surprise, and turned to descend from the bastion into the bosom of the work.

The sounds of other voices, however, caught his attention, and for a moment caused him to forget his purpose. At the inner angle of the mound he met the sisters, walking along the parapet in search, like himself, of air and relief from confinement. They had not met from that painful moment when he deserted them on the plain, only to assure their safety. He had parted from them worn with care, and jaded with fatigue; he now saw them refreshed and blooming, though timid and anxious. Under such an inducement, it will cause no surprise that the young man lost sight, for a time, of other objects in order to address them. He was, however, anticipated by the voice of the ingenuous and youthful Alice.

"Ah! thou truant! thou recreant knight! he who abandons his damsels in the very lists!" she cried; "here have we been days, nay, ages, expecting you at our feet, imploring mercy and forgetfulness of your craven backsliding, or, I should rather say, back-running — for verily you fled in a manner that no stricken deer, as our worthy friend the scout would say, could equal!"

"You know that Alice means our thanks and our blessings," added the graver and more thoughtful Cora. "In truth, we have a little wondered why you should so rigidly absent yourself from a place where the gratitude of the daughters might receive the support of a parent's thanks."

"Your father himself could tell you, that though absent from your presence, I have not been altogether forgetful of your safety," returned the young man; "the mastery of yonder village of huts," pointing to the neighboring entrenched camp, "has been keenly disputed; and he who holds it is sure to be possessed of this fort, and that which it contains. My days and my nights have all been passed there since we separated, because I thought that duty called me thither. But," he added with an air of chagrin, which he endeavored, though unsuccessfully, to conceal, "had I been aware that what I then believed a soldier's conduct could so be construed, shame would have been added to the list of reasons."

"Heyward! — Duncan!" exclaimed Alice, bending forward to read his half-averted countenance, until a lock of her golden hair rested on her flushed cheek, and nearly concealed the tear that had started to her eye; "did I think this idle tongue of mine had pained you, I would silence it forever, Cora can say, if Cora would, how justly we have prized your

services, and how deep — I had almost said, how fervent — is our gratitude.”

“And will Cora attest the truth of this?” cried Duncan, suffering the cloud to be chased from his countenance by a smile of open pleasure. “What says our graver sister? Will she find an excuse for the neglect of the knight in the duty of a soldier?”

Cora made no immediate answer, but turned her face towards the water, as if looking on the sheet of the Horican. When she did bend her dark eyes on the young man, they were yet filled with an expression of anguish that at once drove every thought but that of kind solicitude from his mind.

“You are not well, dearest Miss Munro!” he exclaimed; “we have trifled while you are in suffering.”

“’Tis nothing,” she answered, refusing his offered support with feminine reserve. “That I cannot see the sunny side of the picture of life, like this artless but ardent enthusiast,” she added, laying her hand lightly, but affectionately, on the arm of her sister, “is the penalty of experience, and, perhaps, the misfortune of my nature. See,” she continued, as if determined to shake off infirmity, in a sense of duty; “look around you, Major Heyward, and tell me what a prospect is this for the daughter of a soldier whose greatest happiness is his honor and his military renown.”

“Neither ought nor shall be tarnished by circumstances over which he has had no control,” Duncan warmly replied. “But your words recall me to my own duty. I go now to your gallant father, to hear his determination in matters of the last moment to the defence. God bless you in every fortune, noble — Cora — I may and must call you.” She frankly gave him her hand, though her lip quivered, and her cheeks gradually became of an ashy paleness. “In every fortune, I know you will be an ornament and honor to your sex. Alice, adieu” — his tone changed from admiration to tenderness — “adieu, Alice; we shall soon meet again; as conquerors, I trust, and amid rejoicings!”

Without waiting for an answer from either, the young man threw himself down the grassy steps of the bastion, and moving rapidly across the parade, he was quickly in the presence of their father. Munro was pacing his narrow apartment with a disturbed air and gigantic strides as Duncan entered.

“You have anticipated my wishes, Major Heyward,” he said; “I was about to request this favor.”

“I am sorry to see, sir, that the messenger I so warmly recommended has returned in custody of the French! I hope there is no reason to distrust his fidelity?”

“The fidelity of ‘The Long Rifle’ is well known to me,” returned Munro, “and is above suspicion; though his usual good fortune seems, at last, to have failed. Montcalm has got him, and with the accursed politeness of his nation, he has sent him in with a doleful tale, of ‘knowing how I valued the fellow, he could not think of retaining him.’ A Jesuitical way, that, Major Duncan Heyward, of telling a man of his misfortunes!”

“But the general and his succor?”

“Did ye look to the south as ye entered, and could ye not see them?” said the old soldier, laughing bitterly. “Hoot! hoot! you’re an impatient boy, sir, and cannot give the gentlemen leisure for their march!”

“They are coming, then? The scout has said as much?”

“When? and by what path? for the dunce has omitted to tell me this. There is a letter, it would seem, too; and that is the only agreeable part of the matter. For the customary attentions of your Marquis of Montcalm — I warrant me, Duncan, that he of Lothian would buy a dozen such marquisates — but, if the news of the letter were bad, the gentility of this French monsieur would certainly compel him to let us know it.”

“He keeps the letter, then, while he releases the messenger!”

“Ay, that does he, and all for the sake of what you call your *’bonhomme’*, I would venture, if the truth was known, the fellow’s grandfather taught the noble science of dancing.”

“But what says the scout? he has eyes and ears, and a tongue: what verbal report does he make?”

“O! sir, he is not wanting in natural organs, and he is free to tell all that he has seen and heard. The whole amount is this: there is a fort of his majesty’s on the banks of the Hudson, called Edward, in honor of his gracious highness of York, you’ll know; and it is well filled with armed men, as such a work should be.”

“But was there no movement, no signs of any intention to advance to our relief?”

“There were the morning and evening parades; and when one of the provincial loons — you’ll know, Duncan, you’re half a Scotsman yourself — when one of them dropped his powder over his porretch, if it touched the coals, it just burnt!”

Then suddenly changing his bitter, ironical manner, to one more grave and thoughtful, he continued; "and yet there might, and must be, something in that letter which it would be well to know!"

"Our decision should be speedy," said Duncan, gladly availing himself of this change of humor, to press the more important objects of their interview; "I cannot conceal from you, sir, that the camp will not be much longer tenable; and I am sorry to add, that things appear no better in the fort; more than half the guns are bursted."

"And how should it be otherwise? Some were fished from the bottom of the lake; some have been rusting in the woods since the discovery of the country; and some were never guns at all — mere privateersmen's playthings! Do you think, sir, you can have Woolwich Warren in the midst of a wilderness, three thousand miles from Great Britain!"

"The walls are crumbling about our ears, and provisions begin to fail us," continued Heyward, without regarding this new burst of indignation; "even the men show signs of discontent and alarm."

"Major Heyward," said Munro, turning to his youthful associate with the dignity of his years and superior rank; "I should have served his majesty for half a century, and earned these gray hairs, in vain, were I ignorant of all you say, and of the pressing nature of our circumstances; still, there is everything due to the honor of the king's arms and something to ourselves. While there is hope of succor, this fortress will I defend, though it be to be done with pebbles gathered on the lake shore. It is a sight of the letter, therefore, that we want, that we may know the intentions of the man the Earl of Loudon has left among us as his substitute."

"And can I be of service in the matter?"

"Sir, you can; the Marquis of Montcalm has, in addition to his other civilities, invited me to a personal interview between the works and his own camp; in order, as he says, to impart some additional information. Now, I think it would not be wise to show any undue solicitude to meet him, and I would employ you, an officer of rank, as my substitute; for it would but ill comport with the honor of Scotland to let it be said one of her gentlemen was outdone in civility by a native of any other country on earth."

Without assuming the supererogatory task of entering into a discussion of the comparative merits of national courtesy, Duncan cheerfully assented to supply the place of the veteran in the approaching interview. A long and confidential communication now succeeded, during which the young man received some additional insight into his duty, from the experience and native acuteness of his commander, and then the former took his leave.

As Duncan could only act as the representative of the commandant of the fort, the ceremonies which should have accompanied a meeting between the heads of the adverse forces were of course dispensed with. The truce still existed, and with a roll and beat of the drum, and covered by a little white flag, Duncan left the sally-port, within ten minutes after his instructions were ended. He was received by the French officer in advance with the usual formalities, and immediately accompanied to a distant marquee of the renowned soldier who led the forces of France.

The general of the enemy received the youthful messenger, surrounded by his principal officers, and by a swarthy band of the native chiefs, who had followed him to the field, with the warriors of their several tribes. Heyward paused short, when, in glancing his eyes rapidly over the dark group of the latter, he beheld the malignant countenance of Magua, regarding him with the calm but sullen attention which marked the expression of that subtle savage. A slight exclamation of surprise even burst from the lips of the young man; but instantly recollecting his errand, and the presence in which he stood, he suppressed every appearance of emotion, and turned to the hostile leader, who had already advanced a step to receive him.

The Marquis of Montcalm was, at the period of which we write, in the flower of his age, and, it may be added, in the zenith of his fortunes. But, even in that enviable situation, he was affable, and distinguished as much for his attention to the forms of courtesy, as for that chivalrous courage which, only two short years afterwards, induced him to throw away his life on the plains of Abraham. Duncan, in turning his eyes from the malign expression of Magua, suffered them to rest with pleasure on the smiling and polished features, and the noble military air, of the French general.

"Monsieur," said the latter, "j'ai beaucoup de plaisir à— bah! — où est cet interprète?"

"Je crois, monsieur, qu'il ne sera pas nécessaire," Heyward modestly replied; "je parle un peu Français."

"Ah! j'en suis bien aise," said Montcalm, taking Duncan familiarly by the arm, and leading him deep into the marquee, a little out of ear-shot; "je déteste ces fripons-là; on ne sait jamais sur quel pié on est avec eux. Eh, bien! monsieur," he continued, still speaking in French; "though I should have been proud of receiving your commandant, I am very happy that

he has seen proper to employ an officer so distinguished, and who, I am sure, is so amiable, as yourself."

Duncan bowed low, pleased with the compliment, in spite of a most heroic determination to suffer no artifice to allure him into forgetfulness of the interest of his prince; and Montcalm, after a pause of a moment, as if to recollect his thoughts, proceeded —

"Your commandant is a brave man, and well qualified to repel my assault. Mais, monsieur, is it not time to begin to take more counsel of humanity, and less of your courage? The one as strongly characterizes the hero as the other."

"We consider the qualities as inseparable," returned Duncan, smiling; "but while we find in the vigor of your excellency every motive to stimulate the one, we can, as yet, see no particular call for the exercise of the other."

Montcalm, in his turn, slightly bowed, but it was with the air of a man too practised to remember the language of flattery. After musing a moment, he added —

"It is possible my glasses have deceived me, and that your works resist our cannon better than I had supposed. You know our force?"

"Our accounts vary," said Duncan, carelessly; "the highest, however, has not exceeded twenty thousand men."

The Frenchman bit his lip, and fastened his eyes keenly on the other as if to read his thoughts; then, with a readiness peculiar to himself, he continued, as if assenting to the truth of an enumeration which quite doubled his army —

"It is a poor compliment to the vigilance of us soldiers, monsieur, that, do what we will, we never can conceal our numbers. If it were to be done at all, one would believe it might succeed in these woods. Though you think it too soon to listen to the calls of humanity," he added, smiling archly, "I may be permitted to believe that gallantry is not forgotten by one so young as yourself. The daughters of the commandant, I learn, have passed into the fort since it was invested?"

"It is true, monsieur; but, so far from weakening our efforts, they set us an example of courage in their own fortitude. Were nothing but resolution necessary to repel so accomplished a soldier as M. de Montcalm, I would gladly trust the defence of William Henry to the elder of those ladies."

"We have a wise ordinance in our Salique laws, which says, 'The crown of France shall never degrade the lance to the distaff,'" said Montcalm, dryly, and with a little hauteur; but instantly adding, with his former frank and easy air, "as all the nobler qualities are hereditary, I can easily credit you; though, as I said before, courage has its limits, and humanity must not be forgotten. I trust, monsieur, you come authorized to treat for the surrender of the place?"

"Has your excellency found our defence so feeble as to believe the measure necessary?"

"I should be sorry to have the defence protracted in such a manner as to irritate my red friends there," continued Montcalm, glancing his eyes at the group of grave and attentive Indians, without attending to the other's question; "I find it difficult, even now, to limit them to the usages of war."

Heyward was silent; for a painful recollection of the dangers he had so recently escaped came over his mind, and recalled the images of those defenceless beings who had shared in all his sufferings.

"Ces messieurs-là," said Montcalm, following up the advantage which he conceived he had gained, "are most formidable when baffled: and it is unnecessary to tell you with what difficulty they are restrained in their anger. Eh bien, monsieur! shall we speak of the terms?"

"I fear your excellency has been deceived as to the strength of William Henry, and the resources of its garrison!"

"I have not sat down before Quebec, but an earthen work, that is defended by twenty-three hundred gallant men," was the laconic reply.

"Our mounds are earthen, certainly — nor are they seated on the rocks of Cape Diamond; but they stand on that shore which proved so destructive to Dieskau and his army. There is also a powerful force within a few hours' march of us, which we account upon as part of our means."

"Some six or eight thousand men," returned Montcalm, with much apparent indifference, "whom their leader wisely judges to be safer in their works than in the field."

It was now Heyward's turn to bite his lip with vexation, as the other so coolly alluded to a force which the young man knew to be overrated. Both mused a little while in silence, when Montcalm renewed the conversation, in a way that showed he believed the visit of his guest was solely to propose terms of capitulation. On the other hand, Heyward began to throw sundry inducements in the way of the French general, to betray the discoveries he had made through the intercepted letter.

The artifice of neither, however, succeeded; and after a protracted and fruitless interview, Duncan took his leave, favorably impressed with an opinion of the courtesy and talents of the enemy's captain, but as ignorant of what he came to learn as when he arrived. Montcalm followed him as far as the entrance of the marquee, renewing his invitations to the commandant of the fort to give him an immediate meeting in the open ground, between the two armies.

There they separated, and Duncan returned to the advanced post of the French, accompanied as before; whence he instantly proceeded to the fort, and to the quarters of his own commander.





## CHAPTER 16

"Edg.— *Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.*"

—KING LEAR.

Major Heyward found Munro attended only by his daughters. Alice sat upon his knee, parting the gray hairs on the forehead of the old man with her delicate fingers; and, whenever he affected to frown on her trifling, appeasing his assumed anger by pressing her ruby lips fondly on his wrinkled brow. Cora was seated nigh them, a calm and amused looker-on; regarding the wayward movements of her more youthful sister, with that species of maternal fondness which characterized her love for Alice. Not only the dangers through which they had passed, but those which still impended above them, appeared to be momentarily forgotten, in the soothing indulgence of such a family meeting. It seemed as if they had profited by the short truce, to devote an instant to the purest and best affections: the daughters forgetting their fears, and the veteran his cares, in the security of the moment. Of this scene, Duncan, who in his eagerness to report his arrival had entered unannounced, stood many moments unobserved and a delighted spectator. But the quick and dancing eyes of Alice soon caught a glimpse of his figure reflected from a glass, and she sprang blushing from her father's knee, exclaiming aloud —

"Major Heyward!"

"What of the lad?" demanded the father; "I have sent him to crack a little with the Frenchman. Ha! sir, you are young, and you're nimble! Away with you, ye baggage; as if there were not troubles enough for a soldier, without having his camp filled with such prattling hussies as yourself!"

Alice laughingly followed her sister, who instantly led the way from an apartment where she perceived their presence was no longer desirable. Munro, instead of demanding the result of the young man's mission, paced the room for a few moments, with his hands behind his back, and his head inclined towards the floor, like a man lost in thought. At length he raised his eyes, glistening with a father's fondness, and exclaimed —

"They are a pair of excellent girls, Heyward, and such as any one may boast of."

"You are not now to learn my opinion of your daughters, Colonel Munro."

"True, lad, true," interrupted the impatient old man; "you were about opening your mind more fully on that matter the day you got in; but I did not think it becoming in an old soldier to be talking of nuptial blessings and wedding jokes when the enemies of his king were likely to be unbidden guests at the feast! But I was wrong, Duncan, boy, I was wrong there; and I am now ready to hear what you have to say."

"Notwithstanding the pleasure your assurance gives me, dear sir, I have just now a message from Montcalm —"

"Let the Frenchman and all his host go to the devil, sir?" exclaimed the hasty veteran. "He is not yet master of William Henry, nor shall he ever be, provided Webb proves himself the man he should. No, sir! thank Heaven, we are not yet in such a strait that it can be said Munro is too much pressed to discharge the little domestic duties of his own family. Your mother was the only child of my bosom friend, Duncan; and I'll just give you a hearing, though all the knights of St. Louis were in a body at the sally-port, with the French saint at their head, craving to speak a word under favor. A pretty degree of knighthood, sir, is that which can be bought with sugar-hogsheads! and then your two-penny marquisates! The thistle is the order for dignity and antiquity; the veritable *nemo me impune lacessit* of chivalry! Ye had ancestors in that degree, Duncan, and they were an ornament to the nobles of Scotland."

Heyward, who perceived that his superior took a malicious pleasure in exhibiting his contempt for the message of the French general, was fain to humor a spleen that he knew would be short-lived; he therefore replied with as much indifference as he could assume on such a subject —

"My request, as you know, sir, went so far as to presume to the honor of being your son."

"Ay, boy, you found words to make yourself very plainly comprehended. But, let me ask ye, sir, have you been as intelligible to the girl?"

"On my honor, no," exclaimed Duncan, warmly; "there would have been an abuse of a confided trust, had I taken advantage of my situation for such a purpose."

"Your notions are those of a gentleman, Major Heyward, and well enough in their place. But Cora Munro is a maiden too discreet, and of a mind too elevated and improved, to need the guardianship even of a father."

"Cora!"

"Ay — Cora! we are talking of your pretensions to Miss Munro, are we not, sir?"

"I— I— I was not conscious of having mentioned her name," said Duncan, stammering.

"And to marry whom, then, did you wish my consent, Major Heyward?" demanded the old soldier, erecting himself in the dignity of offended feeling.

"You have another, and not less lovely child."

"Alice!" exclaimed the father, in an astonishment equal to that with which Duncan had just repeated the name of her sister.

"Such was the direction of my wishes, sir."

The young man awaited in silence the result of the extraordinary effect produced by a communication which, as it now appeared, was so unexpected. For several minutes Munro paced the chamber with long and rapid strides, his rigid features working convulsively, and every faculty seemingly absorbed in the musings of his own mind. At length, he paused directly in front of Heyward, and riveting his eyes upon those of the other, he said, with a lip that quivered violently —

"Duncan Heyward, I have loved you for the sake of him whose blood is in your veins; I have loved you for your own good qualities; and I have loved you, because I thought you would contribute to the happiness of my child. But all this love would turn to hatred, were I assured that what I so much apprehend is true."

"God forbid that any act or thought of mine should lead to such a change!" exclaimed the young man, whose eye never quailed under the penetrating look it encountered. Without adverting the impossibility of the other's comprehending those feelings which were hid in his own bosom, Munro suffered himself to be appeased by the unaltered countenance he met, and with a voice sensibly softened, he continued —

"You would be my son, Duncan, and you're ignorant of the history of the man you wish to call your father. Sit ye down, young man, and I will open to you the wounds of a seared heart, in as few words as may be suitable."

By this time, the message of Montcalm was as much forgotten by him who bore it as by the man for whose ears it was intended. Each drew a chair, and while the veteran communed a few moments with his own thoughts, apparently in sadness, the youth suppressed his impatience in a look and attitude of respectful attention. At length the former spoke:—

"You'll know, already, Major Heyward, that my family was both ancient and honorable," commenced the Scotsman; "though it might not altogether be endowed with that amount of wealth that should correspond with its degree. I was, may be, such an one as yourself when I plighted my faith to Alice Graham, the only child of a neighboring laird of some estate. But the connection was disagreeable to her father, on more accounts than my poverty. I did therefore what an honest man should — restored the maiden her troth, and departed the country in the service of my king. I had seen many regions, and had shed much blood in different lands, before duty called me to the islands of the West Indies. There it was my lot to form a connection with one who in time became my wife, and the mother of Cora. She was the daughter of a gentleman of those isles, by a lady whose misfortune it was, if you will," said the old man, proudly, "to be descended, remotely, from that unfortunate class who are so basely enslaved to administer to the wants of a luxurious people. Ay, sir, that is a curse entailed on Scotland by her unnatural union with a foreign and trading people. But could I find a man among them who would dare to reflect on my child, he should feel the weight of a father's anger! Ha! Major Heyward, you are yourself born at the south, where these unfortunate beings are considered of a race inferior to your own."

"'Tis most unfortunately true, sir," said Duncan, unable any longer to prevent his eyes from sinking to the floor in embarrassment.

"And you cast it on my child as a reproach! You scorn to mingle the blood of the Heywards with one so degraded — lovely and virtuous though she be?" fiercely demanded the jealous parent.

"Heaven protect me from a prejudice so unworthy of my reason!" returned Duncan, at the same time conscious of such a feeling, and that as deeply rooted as if it had been ingrafted in his nature. "The sweetness, the beauty, the witchery of your younger daughter, Colonel Munro, might explain my motives, without imputing to me this injustice."

"Ye are right, sir," returned the old man, again changing his tones to those of gentleness, or rather softness; "the girl is

the image of what her mother was at her years, and before she had become acquainted with grief. When death deprived me of my wife I returned to Scotland, enriched by the marriage; and would you think it, Duncan! The suffering angel had remained in the heartless state of celibacy twenty long years, and that for the sake of a man who could forget her! She did more, sir; she over-looked my want of faith, and all difficulties being now removed, she took me for her husband.”

“And became the mother of Alice?” exclaimed Duncan, with an eagerness that might have proved dangerous at a moment when the thoughts of Munro were less occupied than at present.

“She did, indeed,” said the old man, “and dearly did she pay for the blessing she bestowed. But she is a saint in heaven, sir; and it ill becomes one whose foot rests on the grave to mourn a lot so blessed. I had her but a single year, though; a short term of happiness for one who had seen her youth fade in hopeless pining.”

There was something so commanding in the distress of the old man, that Heyward did not dare to venture a syllable of consolation. Munro sat utterly unconscious of the other’s presence, his features exposed and working with the anguish of his regrets, while heavy tears fell from his eyes, and rolled unheeded from his cheeks to the floor. At length he moved, as if suddenly recovering his recollection; when he arose, and taking a single turn across the room, he approached his companion with an air of military grandeur, and demanded —

“Have you not, Major Heyward, some communication that I should hear from the Marquis de Montcalm?”

Duncan started, in his turn, and immediately commenced, in an embarrassed voice, the half-forgotten message. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the evasive, though polite manner, with which the French general had eluded every attempt of Heyward to worm from him the purport of the communication he had proposed making, or on the decided, though still polished message, by which he now gave his enemy to understand, that unless he chose to receive it in person, he should not receive it at all. As Munro listened to the detail of Duncan, the excited feelings of the father gradually gave way before the obligations of his station, and when the other was done, he saw before him nothing but the veteran, swelling with the wounded feelings of a soldier.

“You have said enough, Major Heyward!” exclaimed the angry old man: “enough to make a volume of commentary on French civility. Here has this gentleman invited me to a conference, and when I send him a capable substitute, for ye’re all that, Duncan, though your years are but few, he answers me with a riddle.”

“He may have thought less favorably of the substitute, my dear sir; and you will remember that the invitation, which he now repeats, was to the commandant of the works, and not to his second.”

“Well, sir, is not a substitute clothed with all the power and dignity of him who grants the commission? He wishes to confer with Munro! Faith, sir, I have much inclination to indulge the man, if it should only be to let him behold the firm countenance we maintain in spite of his numbers and his summons. There might be no bad policy in such a stroke, young man.”

Duncan, who believed it of the last importance that they should speedily come at the contents of the letter borne by the scout, gladly encouraged this idea.

“Without doubt, he could gather no confidence by witnessing our indifference,” he said.

“You never said truer word. I could wish, sir, that he would visit the works in open day, and in the form of a storming party: that is the least failing method of proving the countenance of an enemy, and would be far preferable to the battering system he has chosen. The beauty and manliness of warfare has been much deformed, Major Heyward, by the arts of your Monsieur Vauban. Our ancestors were far above such scientific cowardice!”

“It may be very true, sir; but we are now obliged to repel art by art. What is your pleasure in the matter of the interview?”

“I will meet the Frenchman, and that without fear or delay; promptly; sir, as becomes a servant of my royal master. Go, Major Heyward, and give them a flourish of the music; and send out a messenger to let them know who is coming. We will follow with a small guard, for such respect is due to one who holds the honor of his king in keeping; and harkee, Duncan,” he added, in a half whisper, though they were alone, “it may be prudent to have some aid at hand, in case there should be treachery at the bottom of it all.”

The young man availed himself of this order to quit the apartment; and, as the day was fast coming to a close, he hastened, without delay, to make the necessary arrangements. A very few minutes only were necessary to parade a few files, and to despatch an orderly with a flag to announce the approach of the commandant of the fort. When Duncan had

done both these, he led the guard to the sally-port, near which he found his superior ready, waiting his appearance. As soon as the usual ceremonials of a military departure were observed, the veteran and his more youthful companion left the fortress, attended by the escort.

They had proceeded only a hundred yards from the works, when the little array which attended the French general to the conference, was seen issuing from the hollow way, which formed the bed of a brook that ran between the batteries of the besiegers and the fort. From the moment that Munro left his own works to appear in front of his enemies, his air had been grand, and his step and countenance highly military. The instant he caught a glimpse of the white plume that waved in the hat of Montcalm, his eye lighted, and age no longer appeared to possess any influence over his vast and still muscular person.

“Speak to the boys to be watchful, sir,” he said, in an undertone, to Duncan; “and to look well to their flints and steel, for one is never safe with a servant of these Louises; at the same time, we will show them the front of men in deep security. Ye’ll understand me, Major Heyward!”

He was interrupted by the clamor of a drum from the approaching Frenchmen, which was immediately answered, when each party pushed an orderly in advance, bearing a white flag, and the wary Scotsman halted, with his guard close at his back. As soon as this slight salutation had passed, Montcalm moved towards them with a quick but graceful step, baring his head to the veteran, and dropping his spotless plume nearly to the earth in courtesy. If the air of Munro was more commanding and manly, it wanted both the ease and insinuating polish of that of the Frenchman. Neither spoke for a few moments, each regarding the other with curious and interested eyes. Then, as became his superior rank and the nature of the interview, Montcalm broke the silence. After uttering the usual words of greeting, he turned to Duncan, and continued with a smile of recognition, speaking always in French — “I am rejoiced, monsieur, that you have given us the pleasure of your company on this occasion. There will be no necessity to employ an ordinary interpreter; for, in your hands, I feel the same security as if I spoke your language myself.”

Duncan acknowledged the compliment, when Montcalm, turning to his guard, which, in imitation of that of their enemies, pressed close upon him, continued —

“En arrière, mes enfans — il fait chaud; retirez-vous un peu.”

Before Major Heyward would imitate this proof of confidence, he glanced his eyes around the plain, and beheld with uneasiness the numerous dusky groups of savages, who looked out from the margin of the surrounding woods, curious spectators of the interview.

“Monsieur de Montcalm will readily acknowledge the difference in our situation,” he said, with some embarrassment, pointing at the same time towards those dangerous foes, who were to be seen in almost every direction. “Were we to dismiss our guard, we should stand here at the mercy of our enemies.”

"Monsieur, you have the plighted faith of *un gentilhomme Français*; for your safety," returned Montcalm, laying his hand impressively on his heart; "it should suffice."

"It shall. Fall back," Duncan added to the officer who led the escort; "fall back, sir, beyond hearing, and wait for orders."

Munro witnessed this movement with manifest uneasiness; nor did he fail to demand an instant explanation.

"Is it not our interest, sir, to betray no distrust?" retorted Duncan. "Monsieur de Montcalm pledges his word for our safety, and I have ordered the men to withdraw a little, in order to prove how much we depend on his assurance."

"It may be all right, sir, but I have no overweening reliance on the faith of these marquesses, or marquis, as they call themselves. Their patents of nobility are too common to be certain that they bear the seal of true honor."

"You forget, dear sir, that we confer with an officer distinguished alike in Europe and America for his deeds. From a soldier of his reputation we can have nothing to apprehend."

The old man made a gesture of resignation, though his rigid features still betrayed his obstinate adherence to a distrust, which he derived from a sort of hereditary contempt of his enemy, rather than from any present signs which might warrant so uncharitable a feeling. Montcalm waited patiently until this little dialogue in demi-voice was ended, when he drew nigher, and opened the subject of their conference.

"I have solicited this interview from your superior, monsieur," he said, "because I believe he will allow himself to be persuaded that he has already done everything which is necessary for the honor of his prince, and will not listen to the admonitions of humanity. I will forever bear testimony that his resistance has been gallant, and was continued as long as there was hope."

When this opening was translated to Munro, he answered with dignity, but with sufficient courtesy —

"However I may prize such testimony from Monsieur Montcalm, it will be more valuable when it shall be better merited."

The French general smiled, as Duncan gave him the purport of this reply, and observed —

"What is now so freely accorded to approved courage, may be refused to useless obstinacy. Monsieur would wish to see my camp, and witness, for himself, our numbers, and the impossibility of his resisting them, with success?"

"I know that the king of France is well served," returned the unmoved Scotsman, as soon as Duncan ended his translation; "but my own royal master has as many and as faithful troops."

"Though not at hand, fortunately for us," said Montcalm, without waiting, in his ardor, for the interpreter. "There is a destiny in war, to which a brave man knows how to submit, with the same courage that he faces his foes."

"Had I been conscious that Monsieur Montcalm was master of the English, I should have spared myself the trouble of so awkward a translation," said the vexed Duncan, dryly; remembering instantly his recent by-play with Munro.

"Your pardon, monsieur," rejoined the Frenchman, suffering a slight color to appear on his dark cheek. "There is a vast difference between understanding and speaking a foreign tongue; you will, therefore, please to assist me still." Then after a short pause, he added, "These hills afford us every opportunity of reconnoitring your works, messieurs, and I am possibly as well acquainted with their weak condition as you can be yourselves."

"Ask the French general if his glasses can reach to the Hudson," said Munro, proudly; "and if he knows when and where to expect the army of Webb."

"Let General Webb be his own interpreter," returned the politic Montcalm, suddenly extending an open letter towards Munro, as he spoke; "you will there learn, monsieur, that his movements are not likely to prove embarrassing to my army."

The veteran seized the offered paper, without waiting for Duncan to translate the speech, and with an eagerness that betrayed how important he deemed its contents. As his eye passed hastily over the words, his countenance changed from its look of military pride to one of deep chagrin: his lip began to quiver; and, suffering the paper to fall from his hand, his head dropped upon his chest, like that of a man whose hopes were withered at a single blow. Duncan caught the letter from the ground, and without apology for the liberty he took, he read at a glance its cruel purport. Their common superior, so far from encouraging them to resist, advised a speedy surrender, urging in the plainest language as a reason, the utter impossibility of his sending a single man to their rescue.

"Here is no deception!" exclaimed Duncan, examining the billet both inside and out; "this is the signature of Webb,

and must be the captured letter.”

“The man has betrayed me!” Munro at length bitterly exclaimed: “he has brought dishonor to the door of one where disgrace was never before known to dwell, and shame has he heaped heavily on my gray hairs.”

“Say not so,” cried Duncan; “we are yet masters of the fort, and of our honor. Let us then sell our lives at such a rate as shall make our enemies believe the purchase too dear.”

“Boy, I thank thee,” exclaimed the old man, rousing himself from his stupor; “you have, for once, reminded Munro of his duty. We will go back, and dig our graves behind those ramparts.”

“Messieurs,” said Montcalm, advancing towards them a step, in generous interest, “you little know Louis de St. Véran, if you believe him capable of profiting by this letter to humble brave men, or to build up a dishonest reputation for himself. Listen to my terms before you leave me.”

“What says the Frenchman?” demanded the veteran, sternly; “does he make a merit of having captured a scout, with a note from headquarters? Sir, he had better raise this siege, to go and sit down before Edward if he wishes to frighten his enemy with words.”

Duncan explained the other’s meaning.

“Monsieur de Montcalm, we will hear you,” the veteran added, more calmly, as Duncan ended.

“To retain the fort is now impossible,” said his liberal enemy; “it is necessary to the interests of my master that it should be destroyed; but, as for yourselves, and your brave comrades, there is no privilege dear to a soldier that shall be denied.”

“Our colors?” demanded Heyward.

“Carry them to England, and show them to your king.”

“Our arms?”

“Keep them; none can use them better.”

“Our march; the surrender of the place?”

“Shall all be done in a way most honorable to yourselves.”

Duncan now turned to explain these proposals to his commander, who heard him with amazement, and a sensibility that was deeply touched by such unusual and unexpected generosity.

“Go you, Duncan,” he said; “go with this marquess, as indeed marquess he should be; go to his marquee and arrange it all. I have lived to see two things in my old age, that never did I expect to behold. An Englishman afraid to support a friend, and a Frenchman too honest to profit by his advantage.”

So saying, the veteran again dropped his head to his chest, and returned slowly towards the fort, exhibiting, by the dejection of his air, to the anxious garrison, a harbinger of evil tidings.

From the shock of this unexpected blow the haughty feelings of Munro never recovered; but from that moment there commenced a change in his determined character, which accompanied him to a speedy grave. Duncan remained to settle the terms of the capitulation. He was seen to re-enter the works during the first watches of the night, and immediately after a private conference with the commandant, to leave them again. It was then openly announced, that hostilities must cease — Munro having signed a treaty, by which the place was to be yielded to the enemy, with the morning; the garrison to retain their arms, their colors, and their baggage, and consequently, according to military opinion, their honor.



## CHAPTER 17

*"Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.  
The web is wove. The work is done."*

—GRAY.

The hostile armies, which lay in the wilds of the Horican, passed the night of the 9th of August, 1757, much in the manner they would had they encountered on the fairest fields of Europe. While the conquered were still, sullen, and dejected, the victors triumphed. But there are limits alike to grief and joy; and long before the watches of the morning came, the stillness of those boundless woods was only broken by a gay call from some exulting young Frenchman of the advanced pickets, or a menacing challenge from the fort, which sternly forbade the approach of any hostile footsteps before the stipulated moment. Even these occasional threatening sounds ceased to be heard in that dull hour which precedes the day, at which period a listener might have sought in vain any evidence of the presence of those armed powers that then slumbered on the shores of the "holy lake."

It was during these moments of deep silence, that the canvas which concealed the entrance to a spacious marquee in the French encampment was shoved aside, and a man issued from beneath the drapery into the open air. He was enveloped in a cloak that might have been intended as a protection from the chilling damps of the woods, but which served equally well as a mantle, to conceal his person. He was permitted to pass the grenadier, who watched over the slumbers of the French commander, without interruption, the man making the usual salute which betokens military deference, as the other passed swiftly through the little city of tents, in the direction of William Henry. Whenever this unknown individual encountered one of the numberless sentinels who crossed his path, his answer was prompt, and as it appeared satisfactory; for he was uniformly allowed to proceed, without further interrogation.

With the exception of such repeated, but brief interruptions, he had moved, silently, from the centre of the camp, to its most advanced outposts, when he drew nigh the soldier who held his watch nearest to the works of the enemy. As he approached he was received with the usual challenge —

"Qui vive?"

"France," was the reply.

"Le mot d'ordre?"

"La victoire," said the other, drawing so nigh as to be heard in a loud whisper.

"C'est bien," returned the sentinel, throwing his musket from the charge to his shoulder; "vous vous promenez bien matin, monsieur!"

"Il est nécessaire d'être vigilant, mon enfant," the other observed, dropping a fold of his cloak, and looking the soldier close in the face, as he passed him, still continuing his way towards the British fortification. The man started; his arms rattled heavily, as he threw them forward, in the lowest and most respectful salute; and when he had again recovered his piece, he turned to walk his post, muttering between his teeth —

"Il faut être vigilant, en vérité! je crois que nous avons là, un caporal qui ne dort jamais!"

The officer proceeded, without affecting to hear the words which escaped the sentinel in his surprise; nor did he again pause until he had reached the low strand, and in a somewhat dangerous vicinity to the western water bastion of the fort. The light of an obscure moon was just sufficient to render objects, though dim, perceptible in their outlines. He, therefore, took the precaution to place himself against the trunk of a tree, where he leaned for many minutes, and seemed to contemplate the dark and silent mounds of the English works in profound attention. His gaze at the ramparts was not that of a curious or idle spectator; but his looks wandered from point to point, denoting his knowledge of military usages, and betraying that his search was not unaccompanied by distrust. At length he appeared satisfied; and having cast his eyes impatiently upwards towards the summit of the eastern mountain, as if anticipating the approach of the morning, he was in the act of turning on his footsteps, when a light sound on the nearest angle of the bastion caught his ear, and induced him to remain.

Just then a figure was seen to approach the edge of the rampart, where it stood, apparently contemplating in its turn the distant tents of the French encampment. Its head was then turned towards the east, as though equally anxious for the

appearance of light, when the form leaned against the mound, and seemed to gaze upon the glassy expanse of the waters, which, like a submarine firmament, glittered with its thousand mimic stars. The melancholy air, the hour, together with the vast frame of the man who thus leaned, in musing, against the English ramparts, left no doubt as to his person, in the mind of his observant spectator. Delicacy, no less than prudence, now urged him to retire; and he had moved cautiously round the body of the tree for that purpose, when another sound drew his attention, and once more arrested his footsteps. It was a low and almost inaudible movement of the water, and was succeeded by a grating of pebbles one against the other. In a moment he saw a dark form rise, as it were out of the lake, and steal without further noise to the land, within a few feet of the place where he himself stood. A rifle next slowly rose between his eyes and the watery mirror; but before it could be discharged his own hand was on the lock.

“Hugh!” exclaimed the savage, whose treacherous aim was so singularly and so unexpectedly interrupted.

Without making any reply, the French officer laid his hand on the shoulder of the Indian, and led him in profound silence to a distance from the spot, where their subsequent dialogue might have proved dangerous, and where it seemed that one of them, at least, sought a victim. Then, throwing open his cloak, so as to expose his uniform and the cross of St. Louis which was suspended at his breast, Montcalm sternly demanded —

“What means this! Does not my son know that the hatchet is buried between the English and his Canadian Father?”

“What can the Hurons do?” returned the savage, speaking also, though imperfectly, in the French language. “Not a warrior has a scalp, and the pale-faces make friends!”

“Ha! Le Renard Subtil! Methinks this is an excess of zeal for a friend who was so late an enemy! How many suns have set since Le Renard struck the war-post of the English?”

“Where is that sun!” demanded the sullen savage. “Behind the hill; and it is dark and cold. But when he comes again, it will be bright and warm. Le Subtil is the sun of his tribe. There have been clouds, and many mountains between him and his nation; but now he shines, and it is a clear sky!”

“That Le Renard has power with his people, I well know,” said Montcalm; “for yesterday he hunted for their scalps, and to-day they hear him at the council-fire.”

“Magua is a great chief.”

“Let him prove it, by teaching his nation how to conduct itself towards our new friends.”

“Why did the chief of the Canadas bring his young men into the woods, and fire his cannon at the earthen house?” demanded the subtle Indian.

“To subdue it. My master owns the land, and your father has been ordered to drive off these English squatters. They have consented to go, and now he calls them enemies no longer.”

“’Tis well. Magua took the hatchet to color it with blood. It is now bright; when it is red, it shall be buried.”

“But Magua is pledged not to sully the lilies of France. The enemies of the great king across the salt lake are his enemies; his friends, the friends of the Hurons.”

“Friends!” repeated the Indian, in scorn. “Let his father give Magua a hand.”

Montcalm, who felt that his influence over the warlike tribes he had gathered was to be maintained by concession rather than by power, complied reluctantly with the other’s request. The savage placed the finger of the French commander on a deep scar in his bosom, and then exultingly demanded —

“Does my father know that?”

“What warrior does not? ’tis where a leaden bullet has cut.”

“And this?” continued the Indian, who had turned his naked back to the other, his body being without its usual calico mantle.

“This! — my son has been sadly injured, here; who has done this?”

“Magua slept hard in the English wigwams, and the sticks have left their mark,” returned the savage, with a hollow laugh, which did not conceal the fierce temper that nearly choked him. Then recollecting himself, with sudden and native dignity, he added, “Go; teach your young men, it is peace. Le Renard Subtil knows how to speak to a Huron warrior.”

Without deigning to bestow further words, or to wait for any answer, the savage cast his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and moved silently through the encampment towards the woods where his own tribe was known to lie. Every few



yards as he proceeded he was challenged by the sentinels; but he stalked sullenly onward, utterly disregarding the summons of the soldiers, who only spared his life because they knew the air and tread no less than the obstinate daring of an Indian.

Montcalm lingered long and melancholy on the strand, where he had been left by his companion, brooding deeply on the temper which his ungovernable ally had just discovered. Already had his fair fame been tarnished by one horrid scene, and in circumstances fearfully resembling those under which he now found himself. As he mused he became keenly sensible of the deep responsibility they assume who disregard the means to attain their end, and of all the danger of setting in motion an engine which it exceeds human power to control. Then shaking off a train of reflections that he accounted a weakness in such a moment of triumph, he retraced his steps towards his tent, giving the order as he passed, to make the signal that should arouse the army from its slumbers.

The first tap of the French drums was echoed from the bosom of the fort, and presently the valley was filled with the strains of martial music, rising long, thrilling, and lively above the rattling accompaniment. The horns of the victors sounded merry and cheerful flourishes, until the last laggard of the camp was at his post; but the instant the British fifes had blown their shrill signal, they became mute. In the meantime the day had dawned, and when the line of the French army was ready to receive its general, the rays of a brilliant sun were glancing along the glittering array. Then that success, which was already so well known, was officially announced; the favored band who were selected to guard the gates of the fort were detailed, and defiled before their chief; the signal of their approach was given, and all the usual preparations for a change of masters were ordered and executed directly under the guns of the contested works.

A very different scene presented itself within the lines of the Anglo-American army. As soon as the warning signal was given, it exhibited all the signs of a hurried and forced departure. The sullen soldiers shouldered their empty tubes and fell into their places, like men whose blood had been heated by the past contest, and who only desired the opportunity to revenge an indignity which was still wounding to their pride, concealed as it was under all the observances of military etiquette. Women and children ran from place to place, some bearing the scanty remnants of their baggage, and others searching in the ranks for those countenances they looked up to for protection.

Munro appeared among his silent troops firm but dejected. It was evident that the unexpected blow had struck deep into his heart, though he struggled to sustain his misfortune with the port of man.

Duncan was touched at the quiet and impressive exhibition of his grief. He had discharged his own duty, and he now pressed to the side of the old man, to know in what particular he might serve him.

"My daughters," was the brief but expressive reply.

"Good heavens! are not arrangements already made for their convenience?"

"To-day I am only a soldier, Major Heyward," said the veteran. "All that you see here, claim alike to be my children."

Duncan had heard enough. Without losing one of those moments which had now become so precious, he flew towards the quarters of Munro, in quest of the sisters. He found them on the threshold of the low edifice, already prepared to depart, and surrounded by a clamorous and weeping assemblage of their own sex, that had gathered about the place, with a sort of instinctive consciousness that it was the point most likely to be protected. Though the cheeks of Cora were pale, and her countenance anxious, she had lost none of her firmness; but the eyes of Alice were inflamed, and betrayed how long and bitterly she had wept. They both, however, received the young man with undisguised pleasure; the former, for a novelty, being the first to speak.

"The fort is lost," she said, with a melancholy smile; "though our good name, I trust, remains."

"Tis brighter than ever. But, dearest Miss Munro, it is time to think less of others, and to make some provision for yourself. Military usage — pride — that pride on which you so much value yourself, demands that your father and I should for a little while continue with the troops. Then where to seek a proper protector for you against the confusion and chances of such a scene?"

"None is necessary," returned Cora; "who will dare to injure or insult the daughter of such a father, at a time like this?"

"I would not leave you alone," continued the youth, looking about him in a hurried manner, "for the command of the best regiment in the pay of the king. Remember, our Alice is not gifted with all your firmness, and God only knows the terror she might endure."

"You may be right," Cora replied, smiling again, but far more sadly than before. "Listen! chance has already sent us a

friend when he is most needed.”

Duncan did listen, and on the instant comprehended her meaning. The low and serious sounds of the sacred music, so well known to the eastern provinces, caught his ear, and instantly drew him to an apartment in an adjacent building, which had already been deserted by its customary tenants. There he found David, pouring out his pious feelings, through the only medium in which he ever indulged. Duncan waited, until, by the cessation of the movement of the hand, he believed the strain was ended, when, by touching his shoulder, he drew the attention of the other to himself, and in a few words explained his wishes.

“Even so,” replied the single-minded disciple of the King of Israel, when the young man had ended; “I have found much that is comely and melodious in the maidens, and it is fitting that we who have consorted in so much peril, should abide together in peace. I will attend them, when I have completed my morning praise, to which nothing is now wanting but the doxology. Wilt thou bear a part, friend? The metre is common, and the tune, ‘Southwell.’”

Then, extending the little volume, and giving the pitch of the air anew with considerate attention, David recommenced and finished his strains, with a fixedness of manner that it was not easy to interrupt. Heyward was fain to wait until the verse was ended; when, seeing David relieving himself from the spectacles, and replacing the book, he continued —

“It will be your duty to see that none dare to approach the ladies with any rude intention, or to offer insult or taunt at the misfortune of their brave father. In this task you will be seconded by the domestics of their household.”

“Even so.”

“It is possible that the Indians and stragglers of the enemy may intrude, in which case you will remind them of the terms of the capitulation, and threaten to report their conduct to Montcalm. A word will suffice.”

“If not, I have that here which shall,” returned David, exhibiting his book, with an air in which meekness and confidence were singularly blended. “Here are words which, uttered, or rather thundered, with proper emphasis, and in measured time, shall quiet the most unruly temper:—

“‘Why rage the heathen furiously!’”—

“Enough,” said Heyward, interrupting the burst of his musical invocation: “we understand each other; it is time that we should now assume our respective duties.”

Gamut cheerfully assented, and together they sought the females. Cora received her new, and somewhat extraordinary protector, courteously at least; and even the pallid features of Alice lighted again with some of their native archness as she thanked Heyward for his care. Duncan took occasion to assure them he had done the best that circumstances permitted, and, as he believed, quite enough for the security of their feelings; of danger there was none. He then spoke gladly of his intention to rejoin them the moment he had led the advance a few miles towards the Hudson, and immediately took his leave.

By this time the signal of departure had been given, and the head of the English column was in motion. The sisters started at the sound, and glancing their eyes around, they saw the white uniforms of the French grenadiers, who had already taken possession of the gates of the fort. At that moment, an enormous cloud seemed to pass suddenly above their heads, and looking upward, they discovered that they stood beneath the wide folds of the standard of France.

“Let us go,” said Cora; “this is no longer a fit place for the children of an English officer.”

Alice clung to the arm of her sister, and together they left the parade, accompanied by the moving throng that surrounded them.

As they passed the gates, the French officers, who had learned their rank, bowed often and low, forbearing, however, to intrude those attentions which they saw, with peculiar tact, might not be agreeable. As every vehicle and each beast of burden was occupied by the sick and wounded, Cora had decided to endure the fatigues of a foot march, rather than interfere with their comforts. Indeed, many a maimed and feeble soldier was compelled to drag his exhausted limbs in the rear of the columns, for the want of the necessary means of conveyance, in that wilderness. The whole, however, was in motion; the weak and wounded, groaning, and in suffering; their comrades, silent and sullen; and the women and children in terror, they knew not of what.

As the confused and timid throng left the protecting mounds of the fort, and issued on the open plain, the whole scene was at once presented to their eyes. At a little distance on the right, and somewhat in the rear, the French army stood to

their arms, Montcalm having collected his parties, so soon as his guards had possession of the works. They were attentive but silent observers of the proceedings of the vanquished, failing in none of the stipulated military honors, and offering no taunt or insult, in their success, to their less fortunate foes. Living masses of the English, to the amount in the whole of near three thousand, were moving slowly across the plain, towards the common centre, and gradually approached each other, as they converged to the point of their march, a vista cut through the lofty trees, where the road to the Hudson entered the forest. Along the sweeping borders of the woods, hung a dark cloud of savages, eying the passage of their enemies, and hovering, at a distance, like vultures, who were only kept from swooping on their prey, by the presence and restraint of a superior army. A few had straggled among the conquered columns, where they stalked in sullen discontent; attentive, though, as yet, passive observers of the moving multitude.

The advance, with Heyward at its head, had already reached the defile, and was slowly disappearing, when the attention of Cora was drawn to a collection of stragglers, by the sounds of contention. A truant provincial was paying the forfeit of his disobedience, by being plundered of those very effects which had caused him to desert his place in the ranks. The man was of powerful frame, and too avaricious to part with his goods without a struggle. Individuals from either party interfered; the one side to prevent, and the other to aid in the robbery. Voices grew loud and angry, and a hundred savages appeared, as it were by magic, where a dozen only had been seen a minute before. It was then that Cora saw the form of Magua gliding among his countrymen, and speaking with his fatal and artful eloquence. The mass of women and children stopped, and hovered together like alarmed and fluttering birds. But the cupidity of the Indian was soon gratified, and the different bodies again moved slowly onward.

The savages now fell back, and seemed content to let their enemies advance without further molestation. But as the female crowd approached them, the gaudy colors of a shawl attracted the eyes of a wild and untutored Huron. He advanced to seize it, without the least hesitation. The woman, more in terror than through love of the ornament, wrapped her child in the coveted article, and folded both more closely to her bosom. Cora was in the act of speaking, with an intent to advise the woman to abandon the trifle, when the savage relinquished his hold of the shawl, and tore the screaming infant from her arms. Abandoning everything to the greedy grasp of those around her, the mother darted, with distraction in her mien, to reclaim her child. The Indian smiled grimly, and extended one hand, in sign of a willingness to exchange, while with the other, he flourished the babe over his head, holding it by the feet as if to enhance the value of the ransom.

"Here — here — there — all — any — everything!" exclaimed the breathless woman; tearing the lighter articles of dress from her person, with ill-directed and trembling fingers; "take all, but give me my babe!"

The savage spurned the worthless rags, and perceiving that the shawl had already become a prize to another, his bantering but sullen smile changing to a gleam of ferocity, he dashed the head of the infant against a rock, and cast its quivering remains to her very feet. For an instant, the mother stood, like a statue of despair, looking wildly down at the unseemly object, which had so lately nestled in her bosom and smiled in her face; and then she raised her eyes and countenance towards heaven, as if calling on God to curse the perpetrator of the foul deed. She was spared the sin of such a prayer; for, maddened at his disappointment, and excited at the sight of blood, the Huron mercifully drove his tomahawk into her own brain. The mother sank under the blow, and fell, grasping at her child, in death, with the same engrossing love that had caused her to cherish it when living.

At that dangerous moment Magua placed his hands to his mouth, and raised the fatal and appalling whoop. The scattered Indians started at the well-known cry, as coursers bound at the signal to quit the goal; and, directly, there arose such a yell along the plain, and through the arches of the wood, as seldom burst from human lips before. They who heard it listened with a curdling horror at the heart, little inferior to that dread which may be expected to attend the blasts of the final summons.

More than two thousand raving savages broke from the forest at the signal, and threw themselves across the fatal plain with instinctive alacrity. We shall not dwell on the revolting horrors that succeeded. Death was everywhere, and in his most terrific and disgusting aspects. Resistance only served to inflame the murderers, who inflicted their furious blows long after their victims were beyond the power of their resentment. The flow of blood might be likened to the outbreaking of a torrent; and, as the natives became heated and maddened by the sight, many among them even kneeled to the earth, and drank freely, exultingly, hellishly, of the crimson tide.

The trained bodies of the troops threw themselves quickly into solid masses, endeavoring to awe their assailants by the imposing appearance of a military front. The experiment in some measure succeeded, though far too many suffered their

unloaded muskets to be torn from their hands, in the vain hope of appeasing the savages.

In such a scene none had leisure to note the fleeting moments. It might have been ten minutes (it seemed an age), that the sisters had stood riveted to one spot, horror-stricken, and nearly helpless. When the first blow was struck, their screaming companions had pressed upon them in a body, rendering flight impossible; and now that fear or death had scattered most, if not all, from around them, they saw no avenue open, but such as conducted to the tomahawks of their foes. On every side arose shrieks, groans, exhortations, and curses. At this moment Alice caught a glimpse of the vast form of her father, moving rapidly across the plain, in the direction of the French army. He was, in truth, proceeding to Montcalm, fearless of every danger, to claim the tardy escort for which he had before conditioned. Fifty glittering axes and barbed spears were offered unheeded at his life, but the savages respected his rank and calmness, even in their fury. The dangerous weapons were brushed aside by the still nervous arm of the veteran, or fell of themselves, after menacing an act that it would seem no one had courage to perform. Fortunately, the vindictive Magua was searching for his victim in the very band the veteran had just quitted.

"Father — father — we are here!" shrieked Alice, as he passed, at no great distance, without appearing to heed them. "Come to us, father, or we die!"

The cry was repeated, and in terms and tones that might have melted a heart of stone, but it was unanswered. Once, indeed, the old man appeared to catch the sounds, for he paused and listened; but Alice had dropped senseless on the earth, and Cora had sunk at her side, hovering in untiring tenderness over her lifeless form. Munro shook his head in disappointment, and proceeded, bent on the high duty of his station.

"Lady," said Gamut, who, helpless and useless as he was, had not yet dreamed of deserting his trust, "it is the jubilee of the devils, and this is not a meet place for Christians to tarry in. Let us up and fly."

"Go," said Cora, still gazing at her unconscious sister; "save thyself. To me thou canst not be of further use."

David comprehended the unyielding character of her resolution, by the simple but expressive gesture that accompanied her words. He gazed, for a moment, at the dusky forms that were acting their hellish rites on every side of him, and his tall person grew more erect, while his chest heaved, and every feature swelled, and seemed to speak with the power of the feelings by which he was governed.

"If the Jewish boy might tame the evil spirit of Saul by the sound of his harp, and the words of sacred song, it may not be amiss," he said, "to try the potency of music here."

Then raising his voice to its highest tones, he poured out a strain so powerful as to be heard even amid the din of that bloody field. More than one savage rushed towards them, thinking to rifle the unprotected sisters of their attire, and bear away their scalps; but when they found this strange and unmoved figure riveted to his post, they paused to listen. Astonishment soon changed to admiration, and they passed on to other and less courageous victims, openly expressing their satisfaction at the firmness with which the white warrior sang his death song. Encouraged and deluded by his success, David exerted all his powers to extend what he believed so holy an influence. The unwonted sounds caught the ears of a distant savage, who flew raging from group to group, like one who, scorning to touch the vulgar herd, hunted for some victim more worthy of his renown. It was Magua, who uttered a yell of pleasure when he beheld his ancient prisoners again at his mercy.

"Come," he said, laying his soiled hands on the dress of Cora, "the wigwam of the Huron is still open. Is it not better than this place?"

"Away!" cried Cora, veiling her eyes from his revolting aspect.

The Indian laughed tauntingly, as he held up his reeking hand, and answered — "It is red, but it comes from white veins!"

"Monster! there is blood, oceans of blood, upon thy soul; thy spirit has moved this scene."

"Magua is a great chief!" returned the exulting savage; "will the dark hair go to his tribe?"

"Never! strike, if thou wilt, and complete thy revenge."

He hesitated a moment; and then catching the light and senseless form of Alice in his arms, the subtle Indian moved swiftly across the plain towards the woods.

"Hold!" shrieked Cora, following wildly on his footsteps; "release the child! wretch! what is't you do?"

But Magua was deaf to her voice; or rather he knew his power, and was determined to maintain it.

“Stay — lady — stay,” called Gamut, after the unconscious Cora. “The holy charm is beginning to be felt, and soon shalt thou see this horrid tumult stilled.”

Perceiving that, in his turn, he was unheeded, the faithful David followed the distracted sister, raising his voice again in sacred song, and sweeping the air to the measure, with his long arm, in diligent accompaniment. In this manner they traversed the plain, through the flying, the wounded, and the dead. The fierce Huron was, at any time, sufficient for himself and the victim that he bore; though Cora would have fallen, more than once, under the blows of her savage enemies, but for the extraordinary being who stalked in her rear, and who now appeared to the astonished natives gifted with the protecting spirit of madness.

Magua, who knew how to avoid the more pressing dangers, and also to elude pursuit, entered the woods through a low ravine, where he quickly found the Narragansetts, which the travellers had abandoned so shortly before, awaiting his appearance, in custody of a savage as fierce and as malign in his expression as himself. Laying Alice on one of the horses, he made a sign to Cora to mount the other.

Notwithstanding the horror excited by the presence of her captor, there was a present relief in escaping from the bloody scene enacting on the plain, to which Cora could not be altogether insensible. She took her seat, and held forth her arms for her sister, with an air of entreaty and love that even the Huron could not deny. Placing Alice, then, on the same animal with Cora, he seized the bridle, and commenced his route by plunging deeper into the forest. David, perceiving that he was left alone, utterly disregarded, as a subject too worthless even to destroy, threw his long limb across the saddle of the beast they had deserted, and made such progress in the pursuit as the difficulties of the path permitted.

They soon began to ascend, but as the motion had a tendency to revive the dormant faculties of her sister, the attention of Cora was too much divided between the tenderest solicitude in her behalf, and in listening to the cries which were still too audible on the plain, to note the direction in which they journeyed. When, however, they gained the flattened surface of the mountain-top, and approached the eastern precipice, she recognized the spot to which she had once before been led under the more friendly auspices of the scout. Here Magua suffered them to dismount; and, notwithstanding their own captivity, the curiosity which seems inseparable from horror, induced them to gaze at the sickening sight below.

The cruel work was still unchecked. On every side the captured were flying before their relentless persecutors, while the armed columns of the Christian king stood fast in an apathy which has never been explained, and which has left an unmovable blot on the otherwise fair escutcheon of their leader. Nor was the sword of death stayed until cupidity got the mastery of revenge. Then, indeed, the shrieks of the wounded and the yells of their murderers grew less frequent, until, finally, the cries of horror were lost to their ear, or were drowned in the loud, long, and piercing whoops of the triumphant savages.



## CHAPTER 18

*"Why, anything:  
An honorable murderer, if you will;  
For naught I did in hate, but all in honor."*

—OTHELLO.

The bloody and inhuman scene rather incidentally mentioned than described in the preceding chapter, is conspicuous in the pages of colonial history, by the merited title of "The Massacre of William Henry." It so far deepened the stain which a previous and very similar event had left upon the reputation of the French commander, that it was not entirely erased by his early and glorious death. It is now becoming obscured by time; and thousands, who know that Montcalm died like a hero on the plains of Abraham, have yet to learn how much he was deficient in that moral courage without which no man can be truly great. Pages might be written to prove, from this illustrious example, the defects of human excellence; to show how easy it is for generous sentiments, high courtesy, and chivalrous courage, to lose their influence beneath the chilling blight of selfishness, and to exhibit to the world a man who was great in all the minor attributes of character, but who was found wanting when it became necessary to prove how much principle is superior to policy. But the task would exceed our prerogatives; and, as history, like love, is so apt to surround her heroes with an atmosphere of imaginary brightness, it is probable that Louis de Saint Véran will be viewed by posterity only as the gallant defender of his country, while his cruel apathy on the shores of the Oswego and of the Horican will be forgotten. Deeply regretting this weakness on the part of a sister muse, we shall at once retire from her sacred precincts, within the proper limits of our own humble vocation.

The third day from the capture of the fort was drawing to a close, but the business of the narrative must still detain the reader on the shores of the "holy lake." When last seen, the environs of the works were filled with violence and uproar. They were now possessed by stillness and death. The blood-stained conquerors had departed; and their camp, which had so lately rung with the merry rejoicings of a victorious army, lay a silent and deserted city of huts. The fortress was a smouldering ruin; charred rafters, fragments of exploded artillery, and rent mason-work, covering its earthen mounds in confused disorder.

A frightful change had also occurred in the season. The sun had hid its warmth behind an impenetrable mass of vapor, and hundreds of human forms, which had blackened beneath the fierce heats of August, were stiffening in their deformity, before the blasts of a premature November. The curling and spotless mists, which had been seen sailing above the hills towards the north, were now returning in an interminable dusky sheet, that was urged along by the fury of a tempest. The crowded mirror of the Horican was gone; and, in its place, the green and angry waters lashed the shores, as if indignantly casting back its impurities to the polluted strand. Still the clear fountain retained a portion of its charmed influence, but it reflected only the sombre gloom that fell from the impending heavens. That humid and congenial atmosphere which commonly adorned the view, veiling its harshness, and softening its asperities, had disappeared, and the northern air poured across the waste of water so harsh and unmingled, that nothing was left to be conjectured by the eye, or fashioned by the fancy.

The fiercer element had cropped the verdure of the plain, which looked as though it were scathed by the consuming lightning. But, here and there, a dark green tuft rose in the midst of the desolation; the earliest fruits of a soil that had been fattened with human blood. The whole landscape, which, seen by a favoring light, and in a genial temperature, had been found so lovely, appeared now like some pictured allegory of life, in which objects were arrayed in their harshest but truest colors, and without the relief of any shadowing.

The solitary and arid blades of grass arose from the passing gusts fearfully perceptible; the bold and rocky mountains were too distinct in their barrenness, and the eye even sought relief, in vain, by attempting to pierce the illimitable void of heaven, which was shut to its gaze by the dusky sheet of ragged and driving vapor.

The wind blew unequally; sometimes sweeping heavily along the ground, seeming to whisper its moanings in the cold ears of the dead, then rising in a shrill and mournful whistling, it entered the forest with a rush that filled the air with the leaves and branches it scattered in its path. Amid the unnatural shower, a few hungry ravens struggled with the gale; but no sooner was the green ocean of woods, which stretched beneath them, passed, than they gladly stopped, at random, to

their hideous banquet.

In short, it was the scene of wildness and desolation; and it appeared as if all who had profanely entered it had been stricken, at a blow, by the relentless arm of death. But the prohibition had ceased; and for the first time since the perpetrators of those foul deeds which had assisted to disfigure the scene were gone, living human beings had now presumed to approach the place.

About an hour before the setting of the sun, on the day already mentioned, the forms of five men might have been seen issuing from the narrow vista of trees, where the path to the Hudson entered the forest, and advancing in the direction of the ruined works. At first their progress was slow and guarded, as though they entered with reluctance amid the horrors of the spot, or dreaded the renewal of its frightful incidents. A light figure preceded the rest of the party, with the caution and activity of a native; ascending every hillock to reconnoitre, and indicating, by gestures, to his companions, the route he deemed it most prudent to pursue. Nor were those in the rear wanting in every caution and foresight known to forest warfare. One among them, he also was an Indian, moved a little on one flank, and watched the margin of the woods, with eyes long accustomed to read the smallest sign of danger. The remaining three were white, though clad in vestments adapted, both in quality and color, to their present hazardous pursuit — that of hanging on the skirts of a retiring army in the wilderness.

The effects produced by the appalling sights that constantly arose in their path to the lake shore, were as different as the characters of the respective individuals who composed the party. The youth in front threw serious but furtive glances at the mangled victims, as he stepped lightly across the plain, afraid to exhibit his feelings, and yet too inexperienced to quell entirely their sudden and powerful influence. His red associate, however, was superior to such a weakness. He passed the groups of dead with a steadiness of purpose, and an eye so calm, that nothing but long and inveterate practice could enable him to maintain. The sensations produced in the minds of even the white men were different, though uniformly sorrowful. One, whose gray locks and furrowed lineaments, blending with a martial air and tread, betrayed, in spite of the disguise of a woodsman's dress, a man long experienced in scenes of war, was not ashamed to groan aloud, whenever a spectacle of more than usual horror came under his view. The young man at his elbow shuddered, but seemed to suppress his feelings in tenderness to his companion. Of them all, the straggler who brought up the rear appeared alone to betray his real thoughts, without fear of observation or dread of consequences. He gazed at the most appalling sight with eyes and muscles that knew not how to waver, but with execrations so bitter and deep as to denote how much he denounced the crime of his enemies.

The reader will perceive at once, in these respective characters, the Mohicans, and their white friend, the scout; together with Munro and Heyward. It was, in truth, the father in quest of his children, attended by the youth who felt so deep a stake in their happiness, and those brave and trusty foresters, who had already proved their skill and fidelity through the trying scenes related.

When Uncas, who moved in front, had reached the centre of the plain, he raised a cry that drew his companions in a body to the spot. The young warrior had halted over a group of females who lay in a cluster, a confused mass of dead. Notwithstanding the revolting horror of the exhibition, Munro and Heyward flew towards the festering heap, endeavoring, with a love that no unseemliness could extinguish, to discover whether any vestiges of those they sought were to be seen among the tattered and many-colored garments. The father and lover found instant relief in the search; though each was condemned again to experience the misery of an uncertainty that was hardly less insupportable than the most revolting truth. They were standing, silent and thoughtful, around the melancholy pile, when the scout approached. Eying the sad spectacle with an angry countenance, the sturdy woodsman, for the first time since his entering the plain, spoke intelligibly and aloud:—

“I have been on many a shocking field, and have followed a trail of blood for many miles,” he said, “but never have I found the hand of the devil so plain as it is here to be seen! Revenge is an Indian feeling, and all who know me know that there is no cross in my veins; but this much will I say — here, in the face of heaven, and with the power of the Lord so manifest in this howling wilderness — that should these Frenchers ever trust themselves again within the range of a ragged bullet, there is one rifle shall play its part, so long as flint will fire or powder burn! I leave the tomahawk and knife to such as have a natural gift to use them. What say you, Chingachgook,” he added in Delaware; “shall the Hurons boast of this to their women when the deep snows come?”

A gleam of resentment flashed across the dark lineaments of the Mohican chief: he loosened his knife in its sheath;

and then turning calmly from the sight, his countenance settled into a repose as deep as if he never knew the instigation of passion.

"Montcalm! Montcalm!" continued the deeply resentful and less self-restrained scout; "they say a time must come, when all the deeds done in the flesh will be seen at a single look; and that by eyes cleared from mortal infirmities. Woe betide the wretch who is born to behold this plain, with the judgment hanging about his soul! Ha — as I am a man of white blood, yonder lies a redskin, without the hair of his head where nature rooted it! Look to him, Delaware; it may be one of your missing people; and he should have burial like a stout warrior. I see it in your eye, Sagamore: a Huron pays for this, afore the fall winds have blown away the scent of the blood!"

Chingachgook approached the mutilated form, and turning it over, he found the distinguishing marks of one of those six allied tribes, or nations, as they were called, who, while they fought in the English ranks, were so deadly hostile to his own people. Spurning the loathsome object with his foot, he turned from it with the same indifference he would have quitted a brute carcass. The scout comprehended the action, and very deliberately pursued his own way, continuing, however, his denunciations against the French commander in the same resentful strain.

"Nothing but vast wisdom and unlimited power should dare to sweep off men in multitudes," he added; "for it is only the one that can know the necessity of the judgment; and what is there, short of the other, that can replace the creatures of the Lord? I hold it a sin to kill the second buck afore the first is eaten, unless a march in the front, or an ambushment, be contemplated. It is a different matter with a few warriors in open and rugged fight, for 'tis their gift to die with the rifle or the tomahawk in hand; according as their natures may happen to be, white or red. Uncas, come this way, lad, and let the ravens settle upon the Mingo. I know, from often seeing it, that they have a craving for the flesh of an Oneida; and it is as well to let the bird follow the gift of its natural appetite."

"Hugh!" exclaimed the young Mohican, rising on the extremities of his feet, and gazing intently in his front, frightening the raven to some other prey, by the sound and the action.

"What is it, boy?" whispered the scout, lowering his tall form into a crouching attitude, like a panther about to take his leap; "God send it be a tardy Frencher, skulking for plunder. I do believe 'Killdeer' would take an uncommon range to-day!"

Uncas, without making any reply, bounded away from the spot, and in the next instant he was seen tearing from a bush, and waving in triumph a fragment of the green riding-veil of Cora. The movement, the exhibition, and the cry, which again burst from the lips of the young Mohican, instantly drew the whole party about him.

"My child!" said Munro, speaking quick and wildly "give me my child!"

"Uncas will try," was the short and touching answer.

The simple but meaning assurance was lost on the father, who seized the piece of gauze, and crushed it in his hand, while his eyes roamed fearfully among the bushes, as if he equally dreaded and hoped for the secrets they might reveal.

"Here are no dead," said Heyward; "the storm seems not to have passed this way."

"That's manifest; and clearer than the heavens above our heads," returned the undisturbed scout; "but either she, or they that have robbed her, have passed the bush; for I remember the rag she wore to hide a face that all did love to look upon. Uncas, you are right; the dark-hair has been here, and she has fled like a frightened fawn, to the wood; none who could fly would remain to be murdered. Let us search for the marks she left; for to Indian eyes, I sometimes think even a humming-bird leaves his trail in the air."

The young Mohican darted away at the suggestion, and the scout had hardly done speaking, before the former raised a cry of success from the margin of the forest. On reaching the spot, the anxious party perceived another portion of the veil fluttering on the lower branch of a beech.

"Softly, softly," said the scout, extending his long rifle in front of the eager Heyward; "we now know our work, but the beauty of the trail must not be deformed. A step too soon may give us hours of trouble. We have them, though; that much is beyond denial."

"Bless ye, bless ye, worthy man!" exclaimed Munro; "whither, then, have they fled, and where are my babes?"

"The path they have taken depends on many chances. If they have gone alone, they are quite as likely to move in a circle as straight, and they may be within a dozen miles of us; but if the Hurons, or any of the French Indians, have laid hands on them, 'tis probable they are now near the borders of the Canadas. But what matters that?" continued the deliberate scout, observing the powerful anxiety and disappointment the listeners exhibited; "here are the Mohicans and I



on one end of the trail, and, rely on it, we find the other, though they should be a hundred leagues asunder! Gently, gently, Uncas, you are as impatient as a man in the settlements; you forget that light feet leave but faint marks!”

“Hugh!” exclaimed Chingachgook, who had been occupied in examining an opening that had been evidently made through the low underbrush, which skirted the forest; and who now stood erect, as he pointed downwards, in the attitude and with the air of a man who beheld a disgusting serpent.

“Here is the palpable impression of the footstep of a man,” cried Heyward, bending over the indicated spot; “he has trod in the margin of this pool, and the mark cannot be mistaken. They are captives.”

“Better so than left to starve in the wilderness,” returned the scout; “and they will leave a wider trail. I would wager fifty beaver skins against as many flints, that the Mohicans and I enter their wigwams within the month! Stoop to it, Uncas, and try what you can make of the moccasin; for moccasin it plainly is, and no shoe.”

The young Mohican bent over the track, and removing the scattered leaves from around the place, he examined it with much of that sort of scrutiny that a money-dealer, in these days of pecuniary doubts, would bestow on a suspected due-bill. At length he arose from his knees, satisfied with the result of the examination.

“Well, boy,” demanded the attentive scout, “what does it say? can you make anything of the tell-tale?”

“Le Renard Subtil!”

“Ha! that rampaging devil again! there never will be an end of his loping, till ‘Killdeer’ has said a friendly word to him.”

Heyward reluctantly admitted the truth of this intelligence, and now expressed rather his hopes than his doubts by saying —

“One moccasin is so much like another, it is probable there is some mistake.”

“One moccasin like another! you may as well say that one foot is like another; though we all know that some are long, and others short; some broad, and others narrow; some with high, and some with low insteps; some in-toed, and some out. One moccasin is no more like another than one book is like another; though they who can read in one are seldom able to tell the marks of the other. Which is all ordered for the best, giving to every man his natural advantages. Let me get down to it, Uncas; neither book nor moccasin is the worse for having two opinions, instead of one.” The scout stooped to the task, and instantly added, “You are right, boy; here is the patch we saw so often in the other chase. And the fellow will drink when he can get an opportunity: your drinking Indian always learns to walk with a wider toe than the natural savage, it being the gift of a drunkard to straddle, whether of white or red skin. ’Tis just the length and breadth too! look at it, Sagamore: you measured the prints more than once, when we hunted the varmints from Glenn’s to the health-springs.”

Chingachgook complied; and after finishing his short examination, he arose, and with a quiet demeanor, he merely pronounced the word —

“Magua!”

“Ay, ’tis a settled thing; here then have passed the dark-hair and Magua.”

“And not Alice?” demanded Heyward.

“Of her we have not yet seen the signs,” returned the scout, looking closely around at the trees, the bushes, and the ground. “What have we there? Uncas, bring hither the thing you see dangling from yonder thorn-bush.”

When the Indian had complied, the scout received the prize, and holding it on high, he laughed in his silent but heartfelt manner.

“’Tis the tooting we’pon of the singer! now we shall have a trail a priest might travel,” he said. “Uncas, look for the marks of a shoe that is long enough to uphold six feet two of tottering human flesh. I begin to have some hopes of the fellow, since he has given up squalling to follow some better trade.”

“At least, he has been faithful to his trust,” said Heyward; “and Cora and Alice are not without a friend.”

“Yes,” said Hawkeye, dropping his rifle, and leaning on it with an air of visible contempt, “he will do their singing. Can he slay a buck for their dinner; journey by the moss on the beeches, or cut the throat of a Huron? If not, the first catbird<sup>22</sup> he meets is the cleverest of the two. Well, boy, any signs of such a foundation?”

<sup>22</sup> The powers of the American mocking-bird are generally known. But the true mocking-bird is not found so far north as the State of New York, where it has, however, two substitutes of inferior excellence; the catbird, so often named by the scout, and the bird vulgarly called ground-thresher. Either of these two last birds is superior to the nightingale, or the lark, though, in general, the American birds are less musical than those of Europe.

“Here is something like the footstep of one who has worn a shoe; can it be that of our friend?”

“Touch the leaves lightly, or you’ll disconcert the formation. That! that is the print of a foot, but ’tis the dark-hair’s; and small it is, too, for one of such a noble height and grand appearance. The singer would cover it with his heel.”

“Where! let me look on the footsteps of my child,” said Munro, shoving the bushes aside, and bending fondly over the nearly obliterated impression. Though the tread, which had left the mark, had been light and rapid, it was still plainly visible. The aged soldier examined it with eyes that grew dim as he gazed; nor did he rise from his stooping posture until Heyward saw that he had watered the trace of his daughter’s passage with a scalding tear. Willing to divert a distress which threatened each moment to break through the restraint of appearances, by giving the veteran something to do, the young man said to the scout —

“As we now possess these infallible signs, let us commence our march. A moment, at such a time, will appear an age to the captives.”

“It is not the swiftest leaping deer that gives the longest chase,” returned Hawkeye, without moving his eyes from the different marks that had come under his view; “we know that the rampaging Huron has passed — and the dark hair — and the singer — but where is she of the yellow locks and blue eyes? Though little, and far from being as bold as her sister, she is fair to the view, and pleasant in discourse. Has she no friend, that none care for her?”

“God forbid she should ever want hundreds! Are we not now in her pursuit? for one, I will never cease the search till she be found.”

“In that case we may have to journey by different paths; for here she has not passed, light and little as her footstep would be.”

Heyward drew back, all his ardor to proceed seeming to vanish on the instant. Without attending to this sudden change in the other’s humor, the scout, after musing a moment, continued —

“There is no woman in this wilderness could leave such a print as that, but the dark-hair or her sister. We know that the first has been here, but where are the signs of the other? Let us push deeper on the trail, and if nothing offers, we must go back to the plain and strike another scent. Move on, Uncas, and keep your eyes on the dried leaves. I will watch the bushes, while your father shall run with a low nose to the ground. Move on, friends; the sun is getting behind the hills.”

“Is there nothing that I can do?” demanded the anxious Heyward.

“You!” repeated the scout, who, with his red friends, was already advancing in the order he had prescribed; “yes, you can keep in our rear, and be careful not to cross the trail.”

Before they had proceeded many rods, the Indians stopped, and appeared to gaze at some signs on the earth, with more than their usual keenness. Both father and son spoke quick and loud, now looking at the object of their mutual admiration, and now regarding each other with the most unequivocal pleasure.

“They have found the little foot!” exclaimed the scout, moving forward, without attending further to his own portion of the duty. “What have we here? An ambushment has been planted in the spot? No, by the truest rifle on the frontiers, here have been them one-sided horses again! Now the whole secret is out, and all is plain as the north star at midnight. Yes, here they have mounted. There the beasts have been bound to a sapling, in waiting; and yonder runs the broad path away to the north, in full sweep for the Canadas.”

“But still there are no signs of Alice — of the younger Miss Munro,” — said Duncan.

“Unless the shining bauble Uncas has just lifted from the ground should prove one. Pass it this way, lad, that we may look at it.”

Heyward instantly knew it for a trinket that Alice was fond of wearing, and which he recollected, with the tenacious memory of a lover, to have seen, on the fatal morning of the massacre, dangling from the fair neck of his mistress. He seized the highly prized jewel; and as he proclaimed the fact, it vanished from the eyes of the wondering scout, who in vain looked for it on the ground, long after it was warmly pressed against the beating heart of Duncan.

“Pshaw!” said the disappointed Hawkeye, ceasing to rake the leaves with the breech of his rifle; “’tis a certain sign of age, when the sight begins to weaken. Such a glittering gewgaw, and not to be seen! Well, well, I can squint along a clouded barrel yet, and that is enough to settle all disputes between me and the Mingos. I should like to find the thing too, if it were only to carry it to the right owner, and that would be bringing the two ends of what I call a long trail together — for by this

time the broad St. Lawrence, or, perhaps, the Great Lakes themselves, are atwixt us.”

“So much the more reason why we should not delay our march,” returned Heyward; “let us proceed.”

“Young blood and hot blood, they say, are much the same thing. We are not about to start on a squirrel hunt, or to drive a deer into the Horican, but to outlie for days and nights, and to stretch across a wilderness where the feet of men seldom go, and where no bookish knowledge would carry you through harmless. An Indian never starts on such an expedition without smoking over his council-fire; and though a man of white blood, I honor their customs in this particular, seeing that they are deliberate and wise. We will, therefore, go back, and light our fire to-night in the ruins of the old fort, and in the morning we shall be fresh, and ready to undertake our work like men, and not like babbling women or eager boys.”

Heyward saw, by the manner of the scout, that altercation would be useless. Munro had again sunk into that sort of apathy which had beset him since his late overwhelming misfortunes, and from which he was apparently to be roused only by some new and powerful excitement. Making a merit of necessity, the young man took the veteran by the arm, and followed in the footsteps of the Indians and the scout, who had already begun to retrace the path which conducted them to the plain.



## CHAPTER 19

*"SALAR. — Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh; what's that good for?"*

*"SHY. — To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge."*

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

The shades of evening had come to increase the dreariness of the place, when the party entered the ruins of William Henry. The scout and his companions immediately made their preparations to pass the night there; but with an earnestness and sobriety of demeanor, that betrayed how much the unusual horrors they had just witnessed worked on even their practised feelings. A few fragments of rafters were reared against a blackened wall; and when Uncas had covered them slightly with brush, the temporary accommodations were deemed sufficient. The young Indian pointed towards his rude hut, when his labor was ended; and Heyward, who understood the meaning of the silent gesture, gently urged Munro to enter. Leaving the bereaved old man alone with his sorrows, Duncan immediately returned to the open air, too much excited himself to seek the repose he had recommended to his veteran friend.

While Hawkeye and the Indians lighted their fire, and took their evening's repast, a frugal meal of dried bear's meat, the young man paid a visit to that curtain of the dilapidated fort which looked out on the sheet of the Horican. The wind had fallen, and the waves were already rolling on the sandy beach beneath him, in a more regular and tempered succession. The clouds, as if tired of their furious chase, were breaking asunder; the heavier volumes, gathering in black masses about the horizon, while the lighter scud still hurried above the water, or eddied among the tops of the mountains, like broken flights of birds, hovering around their roosts. Here and there, a red and fiery star struggled through the drifting vapor, furnishing a lurid gleam of brightness to the dull aspect of the heavens. Within the bosom of the encircling hills, an impenetrable darkness had already settled; and the plain lay like a vast and deserted charnel-house, without omen or whisper to disturb the slumbers of its numerous and hapless tenants.

Of this scene, so chillingly in accordance with the past, Duncan stood for many minutes a rapt observer. His eyes wandered from the bosom of the mound, where the foresters were seated around their glimmering fire, to the fainter light which still lingered in the skies, and then rested long and anxiously on the embodied gloom, which lay like a dreary void on that side of him where the dead reposed. He soon fancied that inexplicable sounds arose from the place, though so indistinct and stolen, as to render not only their nature but even their existence uncertain. Ashamed of his apprehensions, the young man turned towards the water, and strove to divert his attentions to the mimic stars that dimly glimmered on its moving surface. Still, his too conscious ears performed their ungrateful duty, as if to warn him of some lurking danger. At length a swift trampling seemed quite audibly to rush athwart the darkness. Unable any longer to quiet his uneasiness, Duncan spoke in a low voice to the scout, requesting him to ascend the mound to the place where he stood. Hawkeye threw his rifle across an arm, and complied, but with an air so unmoved and calm, as to prove how much he counted on the security of their position.

"Listen!" said Duncan, when the other placed himself deliberately at his elbow: "there are suppressed noises on the plain which may show that Montcalm has not yet entirely deserted his conquest."

"Then ears are better than eyes," said the undisturbed scout, who, having just deposited a portion of bear between his grinders, spoke thick and slow, like one whose mouth was doubly occupied. "I, myself, saw him caged in Ty, with all his host; for your Frenchers, when they have done a clever thing, like to get back, and have a dance, or a merry-making, with the women over their success."

"I know not. An Indian seldom sleeps in war, and plunder may keep a Huron here after his tribe has departed. It would be well to extinguish the fire, and have a watch — listen! you hear the noise I mean!"

"An Indian more rarely lurks about the graves. Though ready to slay, and not over-regardful of the means, he is commonly content with the scalp, unless when blood is hot, and temper up; but after the spirit is once fairly gone, he forgets his enmity, and is willing to let the dead find their natural rest. Speaking of spirits, Major, are you of opinion that the heaven of a redskin and of us whites will be one and the same?"

"No doubt — no doubt. I thought I heard it again! or was it the rustling of the leaves in the top of the beech?"

"For my own part," continued Hawkeye, turning his face, for a moment, in the direction indicated by Heyward, but

with a vacant and careless manner, "I believe that paradise is ordained for happiness; and that men will be indulged in it according to their dispositions and gifts. I therefore judge that a redskin is not far from the truth when he believes he is to find them glorious hunting-grounds of which his traditions tell; nor, for that matter, do I think it would be any disparagement to a man without a cross to pass his time —"

"You hear it again?" interrupted Duncan.

"Ay, ay; when food is scarce, and when food is plenty, a wolf grows bold," said the unmoved scout. "There would be picking, too, among the skins of the devils, if there was light and time for the sport. But, concerning the life that is to come, major: I have heard preachers say, in the settlements, that heaven was a place of rest. Now men's minds differ as to their ideas of enjoyment. For myself, and I say it with reverence to the ordering of Providence, it would be no great indulgence to be kept shut up in those mansions of which they preach, having a natural longing for motion and the chase."

Duncan, who was now made to understand the nature of the noises he had heard, answered with more attention to the subject which the humor of the scout had chosen for discussion, by saying —

"It is difficult to account for the feelings that may attend the last great change."

"It would be a change, indeed, for a man who has passed his days in the open air," returned the single-minded scout; "and who has so often broken his fast on the head-waters of the Hudson, to sleep within sound of the roaring Mohawk. But it is a comfort to know we serve a merciful Master, though we do it each after his fashion, and with great tracts of wilderness atween us — what goes there?"

"Is it not the rushing of the wolves you have mentioned?"

Hawkeye slowly shook his head, and beckoned for Duncan to follow him to a spot, to which the glare from the fire did not extend. When he had taken this precaution, the scout placed himself in an attitude of intense attention, and listened long and keenly for a repetition of the low sound that had so unexpectedly startled him. His vigilance, however, seemed exercised in vain; for, after a fruitless pause, he whispered to Duncan —

"We must give a call to Uncas. The boy has Indian senses, and may hear what is hid from us; for being a white-skin, I will not deny my nature."

The young Mohican, who was conversing in a low voice with his father, started as he heard the moaning of an owl, and springing on his feet he looked towards the black mounds, as if seeking the place whence the sounds proceeded. The scout repeated the call, and in a few moments, Duncan saw the figure of Uncas stealing cautiously along the rampart, to the spot where they stood.

Hawkeye explained his wishes in a very few words, which were spoken in the Delaware tongue. So soon as Uncas was in possession of the reason why he was summoned, he threw himself flat on the turf; where, to the eyes of Duncan, he appeared to lie quiet and motionless. Surprised at the immovable attitude of the young warrior, and curious to observe the manner in which he employed his faculties to obtain the desired information, Heyward advanced a few steps, and bent over the dark object, on which he had kept his eyes riveted. Then it was he discovered that the form of Uncas had vanished, and that he beheld only the dark outline of an inequality in the embankment.

"What has become of the Mohican?" he demanded of the scout, stepping back in amazement; "it was here that I saw him fall, and I could have sworn that here he yet remained."

"Hist! speak lower; for we know not what ears are open, and the Mingos are a quick-witted breed. As for Uncas, he is out on the plain, and the Maquas, if any such are about us, will find their equal."

"You think that Montcalm has not called off all his Indians? Let us give the alarm to our companions, that we may stand to our arms. Here are five of us, who are not unused to meet an enemy."

"Not a word to either, as you value life. Look at the Sagamore, how like a grand Indian chief he sits by the fire. If there are any skulkers out in the darkness, they will never discover by his countenance that we suspect danger at hand."

"But they may discover him, and it will prove his death. His person can be too plainly seen by the light of that fire, and he will become the first and most certain victim."

"It is undeniable that now you speak the truth," returned the scout, betraying more anxiety than was usual; "yet what can be done? A single suspicious look might bring on an attack before we are ready to receive it. He knows, by the call I gave to Uncas, that we have struck a scent: I will tell him that we are on the trail of the Mingos; his Indian nature will teach

him how to act.”

The scout applied his fingers to his mouth, and raised a low hissing sound, that caused Duncan, at first, to start aside, believing that he heard a serpent. The head of Chingachgook was resting on a hand, as he sat musing by himself; but the moment he heard the warning of the animal whose name he bore, it arose to an upright position and his dark eyes glanced swiftly and keenly on every side of him. With this sudden and perhaps involuntary movement, every appearance of surprise or alarm ended. His rifle lay untouched, and apparently unnoticed, within reach of his hand. The tomahawk that he had loosened in his belt for the sake of ease, was even suffered to fall from its usual situation to the ground, and his form seemed to sink, like that of a man whose nerves and sinews were suffered to relax for the purpose of rest. Cunningly resuming his former position, though with a change of hands, as if the movement had been made merely to relieve the limb, the native awaited the result with a calmness and fortitude that none but an Indian warrior would have known how to exercise.

But Heyward saw that while to a less instructed eye the Mohican chief appeared to slumber, his nostrils were expanded, his head was turned a little to one side, as if to assist the organs of hearing, and that his quick and rapid glances ran incessantly over every object, within the power of his vision.

“See the noble fellow!” whispered Hawkeye, pressing the arm of Heyward; “he knows that a look or a motion might discant our schemes, and put us at the mercy of them imps —”

He was interrupted by the flash and report of a rifle. The air was filled with sparks of fire around that spot where the eyes of Heyward were still fastened with admiration and wonder. A second look told him that Chingachgook had disappeared in the confusion. In the meantime the scout had thrown forward his rifle, like one prepared for service, and awaited impatiently the moment when an enemy might rise to view. But with the solitary and fruitless attempt made on the life of Chingachgook, the attack appeared to have terminated. Once or twice the listeners thought they could distinguish the distant rustling of bushes, as bodies of some unknown description rushed through them; nor was it long before Hawkeye pointed out the “scampering of the wolves,” as they fled precipitately before the passage of some intruder on their proper domains. After an impatient and breathless pause, a plunge was heard in the water, and it was immediately followed by the report of another rifle.

“There goes Uncas!” said the scout; “the boy bears a smart piece! I know its crack, as well as a father knows the language of his child, for I carried the gun myself until a better offered.”

“What can this mean?” demanded Duncan; “we are watched, and, as it would seem, marked for destruction.”

“Yonder scattered brand can witness that no good was intended, and this Indian will testify that no harm has been done,” returned the scout, dropping his rifle across his arm again, and following Chingachgook, who just then reappeared within the circle of light, into the bosom of the woods. “How is it, Sagamore? Are the Mingos upon us in earnest, or is it only one of those reptiles who hang upon the skirts of a war party, to scalp the dead, go in, and make their boast among the squaws of the valiant deeds done on the pale-faces?”

Chingachgook very quietly resumed his seat; nor did he make any reply, until after he had examined the firebrand which had been struck by the bullet that had nearly proved fatal to himself. After which, he was content to reply, holding a single finger up to view, with the English monosyllable —

“One.”

“I thought as much,” returned Hawkeye, seating himself; “and as he had got the cover of the lake afore Uncas pulled upon him, it is more than probable the knave will sing his lies about some great ambushment, in which he was outlying on the trail of two Mohicans and a white hunter — for the officers can be considered as little better than idlers in such a scrimmage. Well, let him — let him. There are always some honest men in every nation, though heaven knows, too, that they are scarce among the Maquas, to look down an upstart when he brags ag’in the face of reason. The varlet sent his lead within whistle of your ears, Sagamore.”

Chingachgook turned a calm and incurious eye towards the place where the ball had struck, and then resumed his former attitude, with a composure that could not be disturbed by so trifling an incident. Just then Uncas glided into the circle, and seated himself at the fire, with the same appearance of indifference as was maintained by his father.

Of these several movements Heyward was a deeply interested and wondering observer. It appeared to him as though the foresters had some secret means of intelligence, which had escaped the vigilance of his own faculties. In place of that

eager and garrulous narration with which a white youth would have endeavored to communicate, and perhaps exaggerate, that which had passed out in the darkness of the plain, the young warrior was seemingly content to let his deeds speak for themselves. It was, in fact, neither the moment nor the occasion for an Indian to boast of his exploits; and it is probable, that had Heyward neglected to inquire, not another syllable would, just then, have been uttered on the subject.

"What has become of our enemy, Uncas?" demanded Duncan: "we heard your rifle, and hoped you had not fired in vain."

The young chief removed a fold of his hunting-shirt, and quietly exposed the fatal tuft of hair, which he bore as the symbol of victory. Chingachgook laid his hand on the scalp, and considered it for a moment with deep attention. Then dropping it, with disgust depicted in his strong features, he ejaculated —

"Oneida!"

"Oneida!" repeated the scout, who was fast losing his interest in the scene, in an apathy nearly assimilated to that of his red associates, but who now advanced with uncommon earnestness to regard the bloody badge. "By the Lord, if the Oneidas are outlying upon the trail, we shall be flanked by devils on every side of us! Now, to white eyes there is no difference between this bit of skin and that of any other Indian, and yet the Sagamore declares it came from the poll of a Mingo; nay, he even names the tribe of the poor devil with as much ease as if the scalp was the leaf of a book, and each hair a letter. What right have Christian whites to boast of their learning, when a savage can read a language that would prove too much for the wisest of them all! What say *you*, lad; of what people was the knave?"

Uncas raised his eyes to the face of the scout, and answered, in his soft voice —

"Oneida."

"Oneida, again! when one Indian makes a declaration it is commonly true; but when he is supported by his people, set it down as gospel!"

"The poor fellow has mistaken us for French," said Heyward; "or he would not have attempted the life of a friend."

"He mistake a Mohican in his paint for a Huron! You would be as likely to mistake the white-coated grenadiers of Montcalm for the scarlet jackets of the 'Royal Americans'," returned the scout. "No, no, the serpent knew his errand; nor was there any great mistake in the matter, for there is but little love atween a Delaware and a Mingo, let their tribes go out to fight for whom they may, in a white quarrel. For that matter, though the Oneidas do serve his sacred majesty, who is my own sovereign lord and master, I should not have deliberated long about letting off 'Killdeer' at the imp myself, had luck thrown him in my way."

"That would have been an abuse of our treaties, and unworthy of your character."

"When a man consorts much with a people," continued Hawkeye, "if they are honest and he no knave, love will grow up atwixt them. It is true that white cunning has managed to throw the tribes into great confusion as respects friends and enemies; so that the Hurons and the Oneidas, who speak the same tongue, or what may be called the same, take each other's scalps, and the Delawares are divided among themselves; a few hanging about their great council-fire on their own river, and fighting on the same side with the Mingos, while the greater part are in the Canadas, out of natural enmity to the Maquas — thus throwing everything into disorder, and destroying all the harmony of warfare. Yet a red natur' is not likely to alter with every shift of policy; so that the love atwixt a Mohican and a Mingo is much like the regard between a white man and a serpent."

"I regret to hear it; for I had believed those natives who dwelt within our boundaries had found us too just and liberal, not to identify themselves fully with our quarrels."

"Why, I believe it is natur' to give a preference to one's own quarrels before those of strangers. Now, for myself, I do love justice; and therefore I will not say I hate a Mingo, for that may be unsuitable to my color and my religion, though I will just repeat, it may have been owing to the night that 'Killdeer' had no hand in the death of this skulking Oneida."

Then, as if satisfied with the force of his own reasons, whatever might be their effect on the opinions of the other disputant, the honest but implacable woodsman turned from the fire, content to let the controversy slumber. Heyward withdrew to the rampart, too uneasy and too little accustomed to the warfare of the woods to remain at ease under the possibility of such insidious attacks. Not so, however, with the scout and the Mohicans. Those acute and long practised senses, whose powers so often exceed the limits of all ordinary credulity, after having detected the danger, had enabled them to ascertain its magnitude and duration. Not one of the three appeared in the least to doubt their perfect security, as

was indicated by the preparations that were soon made to sit in council over their future proceedings.

The confusion of nations, and even of tribes, to which Hawkeye alluded, existed at that period in the fullest force. The great tie of language, and, of course, of a common origin, was severed in many places; and it was one of its consequences, that the Delaware and the Mingo (as the people of the Six Nations were called) were found fighting in the same ranks, while the latter sought the scalp of the Huron, though believed to be the root of his own stock. The Delawares were even divided among themselves. Though love for the soil which had belonged to his ancestors kept the Sagamore of the Mohicans with a small band of followers who were serving at Edward, under the banners of the English king, by far the largest portion of his nation were known to be in the field as allies of Montcalm. The reader probably knows, if enough has not already been gleaned from this narrative, that the Delaware, or Lenape, claimed to be the progenitors of that numerous people, who once were masters of most of the Eastern and Northern States of America, of whom the community of the Mohicans was an ancient and highly honored member.

It was, of course, with a perfect understanding of the minute and intricate interest which had armed friend against friend, and brought natural enemies to combat by each other's side, that the scout and his companions now disposed themselves to deliberate on the measures that were to govern their future movements, amid so many jarring and savage races of men. Duncan knew enough of Indian customs to understand the reason that the fire was replenished, and why the warriors, not excepting Hawkeye, took their seats within the curl of its smoke with so much gravity and decorum. Placing himself at an angle of the works, where he might be a spectator of the scene within, while he kept a watchful eye against any danger from without, he awaited the result with as much patience as he could summon.

After a short and impressive pause, Chingachgook lighted a pipe whose bowl was curiously carved in one of the soft stones of the country, and whose stem was a tube of wood, and commenced smoking. When he had inhaled enough of the fragrance of the soothing weed, he passed the instrument into the hands of the scout. In this manner the pipe had made its rounds three several times, amid the most profound silence, before either of the party opened his lips. Then the Sagamore, as the oldest and highest in rank, in a few calm and dignified words, proposed the subject for deliberation. He was answered by the scout; and Chingachgook rejoined, when the other objected to his opinions. But the youthful Uncas continued a silent and respectful listener, until Hawkeye, in complaisance, demanded his opinion. Heyward gathered from the manners of the different speakers, that the father and son espoused one side of a disputed question, while the white man maintained the other. The contest gradually grew warmer, until it was quite evident the feelings of the speakers began to be somewhat enlisted in the debate.

Notwithstanding the increasing warmth of the amicable contest, the most decorous Christian assembly, not even excepting those in which its reverend ministers are collected, might have learned a wholesome lesson of moderation from the forbearance and courtesy of the disputants. The words of Uncas were received with the same deep attention as those which fell from the maturer wisdom of his father; and so far from manifesting any impatience, neither spoke in reply, until a few moments of silent meditation were, seemingly, bestowed in deliberating on what had already been said.

The language of the Mohicans was accompanied by gestures so direct and natural, that Heyward had but little difficulty in following the thread of their argument. On the other hand, the scout was obscure; because, from the lingering pride of color, he rather affected the cold and artificial manner which characterizes all classes of Anglo-Americans, when unexcited. By the frequency with which the Indians described the marks of a forest trail, it was evident they urged a pursuit by land, while the repeated sweep of Hawkeye's arm towards the Horican denoted that he was for a passage across its waters.

The latter was, to every appearance, fast losing ground, and the point was about to be decided against him, when he arose to his feet, and shaking off his apathy, he suddenly assumed the manner of an Indian, and adopted all the arts of native eloquence. Elevating an arm, he pointed out the track of the sun, repeating the gesture for every day that was necessary to accomplish their object. Then he delineated a long and painful path, amid rocks and water-courses. The age and weakness of the slumbering and unconscious Munro were indicated by signs too palpable to be mistaken. Duncan perceived that even his own powers were spoken lightly of, as the scout extended his palm, and mentioned him by appellation of the "Open Hand,"— a name his liberality had purchased of all the friendly tribes. Then came a representation of the light and graceful movements of a canoe, set in forcible contrast to the tottering steps of one enfeebled and tired. He concluded by pointing to the scalp of the Oneida, and apparently urging the necessity of their departing speedily, and in a manner that should leave no trail.



The Mohicans listened gravely, and with countenances that reflected the sentiments of the speaker. Conviction gradually wrought its influence, and towards the close of Hawkeye's speech, his sentences were accompanied by the customary exclamation of commendation. In short, Uncas and his father became converts to his way of thinking, abandoning their own previously expressed opinions with a liberality and candor that, had they been the representatives of some great and civilized people, would have infallibly worked their political ruin, by destroying, forever, their reputation for consistency.

The instant the matter in discussion was decided, the debate, and everything connected with it, except the results, appeared to be forgotten. Hawkeye, without looking round to read his triumph in applauding eyes, very composedly stretched his tall frame before the dying embers, and closed his own organs in sleep.

Left now in a measure to themselves, the Mohicans, whose time had been so much devoted to the interests of others, seized the moment to devote some attention to themselves. Casting off, at once, the grave and austere demeanor of an Indian chief, Chingachgook commenced speaking to his son in the soft and playful tones of affection. Uncas gladly met the familiar air of his father; and before the hard breathing of the scout announced that he slept, a complete change was effected in the manner of his two associates.

It is impossible to describe the music of their language, while thus engaged in laughter and endearments, in such a way as to render it intelligible to those whose ears have never listened to its melody. The compass of their voices, particularly that of the youth, was wonderful — extending from the deepest bass to tones that were even feminine in softness. The eyes of the father followed the plastic and ingenious movements of the son with open delight, and he never failed to smile in reply to the other's contagious, but low laughter. While under the influence of these gentle and natural feelings, no trace of ferocity was to be seen in the softened features of the Sagamore. His figured panoply of death looked more like a disguise assumed in mockery, than a fierce annunciation of a desire to carry destruction in his footsteps.

After an hour passed in the indulgence of their better feelings, Chingachgook abruptly announced his desire to sleep, by wrapping his head in his blanket, and stretching his form on the naked earth. The merriment of Uncas instantly ceased; and carefully raking the coals in such a manner that they should impart their warmth to his father's feet, the youth sought his own pillow among the ruins of the place.

Imbibing renewed confidence from the security of these experienced foresters, Heyward soon imitated their example; and long before the night had turned, they who lay in the bosom of the ruined work, seemed to slumber as heavily as the unconscious multitude whose bones were already beginning to bleach on the surrounding plain.



## CHAPTER 20

*"Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes  
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!"*

—CHILDE HAROLD.

The heavens were still studded with stars, when Hawkeye came to arouse the sleepers. Casting aside their cloaks Munro and Heyward were on their feet while the woodsman was still making his low calls, at the entrance of the rude shelter where they had passed the night. When they issued from beneath its concealment, they found the scout awaiting their appearance nigh by, and the only salutation between them was the significant gesture for silence, made by their sagacious leader.

"Think over your prayers," he whispered, as they approached him; "for He to whom you make them knows all tongues; that of the heart as well as those of the mouth. But speak not a syllable; it is rare for a white voice to pitch itself properly in the woods, as we have seen by the example of that miserable devil, the singer. Come," he continued, turning towards a curtain of the works; "let us get into the ditch on this side, and be regardful to step on the stones and fragments of wood as you go."

His companions complied, though to two of them the reasons of this extraordinary precaution were yet a mystery. When they were in the low cavity that surrounded the earthen fort on three sides, they found the passage nearly choked by the ruins. With care and patience, however, they succeeded in clambering after the scout, until they reached the sandy shore of the Horican.

"That's a trail that nothing but a nose can follow," said the satisfied scout, looking back along their difficult way; "grass is a treacherous carpet for a flying party to tread on, but wood and stone take no print from a moccasin. Had you worn your armed boots, there might, indeed, have been something to fear; but with the deer-skin suitably prepared, a man may trust himself, generally, on rocks with safety. Shove in the canoe nigher to the land, Uncas; this sand will take a stamp as easily as the butter of the Jarman on the Mohawk. Softly, lad, softly; it must not touch the beach, or the knaves will know by what road we have left the place."

The young man observed the precaution; and the scout, laying a board from the ruins to the canoe, made a sign for the two officers to enter. When this was done, everything was studiously restored to its former disorder; and then Hawkeye succeeded in reaching his little birchen vessel, without leaving behind him any of those marks which he appeared so much to dread. Heyward was silent, until the Indians had cautiously paddled the canoe some distance from the fort, and within the broad and dark shadow that fell from the eastern mountain on the glassy surface of the lake; then he demanded —

"What need have we for this stolen and hurried departure?"

"If the blood of an Oneida could stain such a sheet of pure water as this we float on," returned the scout, "your two eyes would answer your own question. Have you forgotten the skulking reptyle that Uncas slew?"

"By no means. But he was said to be alone, and dead men give no cause for fear."

"Ay, he was alone in his deviltry! but an Indian whose tribe counts so many warriors, need seldom fear his blood will run, without the death-shriek coming speedily from some of his enemies."

"But our presence — the authority of Colonel Munro — would prove a sufficient protection against the anger of our allies, especially in a case where a wretch so well merited his fate. I trust in Heaven you have not deviated a single foot from the direct line of our course, with so slight a reason!"

"Do you think the bullet of that varlet's rifle would have turned aside, though his majesty the king had stood in its path?" returned the stubborn scout. "Why did not the grand Frencher, he who is captain-general of the Canadas, bury the tomahawks of the Hurons, if a word from a white can work so strongly on the natur' of an Indian?"

The reply of Heyward was interrupted by a groan from Munro; but after he had paused a moment, in deference to the sorrow of his aged friend, he resumed the subject.

"The Marquis of Montcalm can only settle that error with his God," said the young man solemnly.

"Ay, ay; now there is reason in your words, for they are bottomed on religion and honesty. There is a vast difference

between throwing a regiment of white coats atwixt the tribes and the prisoners, and coaxing an angry savage to forget he carries a knife and a rifle, with words that must begin with calling him your son. No, no," continued the scout, looking back at the dim shore of William Henry, which was now fast receding, and laughing in his own silent but heartfelt manner; "I have put a trail of water atween us; and unless the imps can make friends with the fishes, and hear who has paddled across their basin, this fine morning, we shall throw the length of the Horican behind us, before they have made up their minds which path to take."

"With foes in front, and foes in our rear, our journey is like to be one of danger."

"Danger!" repeated Hawkeye, calmly; "no, not absolutely of danger; for, with vigilant ears and quick eyes, we can manage to keep a few hours ahead of the knaves; or, if we must try the rifle, there are three of us who understand its gifts as well as any you can name on the borders. No, not of danger; but that we shall have what you may call a brisk push of it is probable; and it may happen, a brush, a skirmish, or some such diversion, but always where covers are good, and ammunition abundant."

It is possible that Heyward's estimate of danger differed in some degree from that of the scout, for, instead of replying, he now sat in silence, while the canoe glided over several miles of water. Just as the day dawned, they entered the narrows of the lake,<sup>23</sup> and stole swiftly and cautiously among their numberless little islands. It was by this road that Montcalm had retired with his army; and the adventurers knew not but he had left some of his Indians in ambush, to protect the rear of his forces, and collect the stragglers. They, therefore, approached the passage with the customary silence of their guarded habits.

<sup>23</sup> The beauties of Lake George are well known to every American tourist. In the height of the mountains which surround it, and in artificial accessories, it is inferior to the finest of the Swiss and Italian lakes, while in outline and purity of water it is fully their equal; and in the number and disposition of its isles and islets much superior to them all together. There are said to be some hundreds of islands in a sheet of water less than thirty miles long. The narrows which connect what may be called, in truth, two lakes, are crowded with islands to such a degree as to leave passages between them frequently of only a few feet in width. The lake itself varies in breadth from one to three miles.

The State of New York is remarkable for the number and beauty of its lakes. One of its frontiers lies on the vast sheet of Ontario, while Champlain stretches nearly a hundred miles along another. Oneida, Cayuga, Canandaigua, Seneca, and George, are all lakes of thirty miles in length, while those of a size smaller are without number. On most of these lakes there are now beautiful villages, and on many of them steamboats.

Chingachgook laid aside his paddle; while Uncas and the scout urged the light vessel through crooked and intricate channels, where every foot that they advanced exposed them to the danger of some sudden rising on their progress. The eyes of the Sagamore moved warily from islet to islet, and copse to copse, as the canoe proceeded; and when a clearer sheet of water permitted, his keen vision was bent along the bald rocks and impending forests, that frowned upon the narrow strait.

Heyward, who was a doubly interested spectator, as well from the beauties of the place as from the apprehension natural to his situation, was just believing that he had permitted the latter to be excited without sufficient reason, when the paddle ceased moving, in obedience to a signal from Chingachgook.

"Hugh!" exclaimed Uncas, nearly at the moment that the light tap his father had made on the side of the canoe notified them of the vicinity of danger.

"What now?" asked the scout; "the lake is as smooth as if the winds had never blown, and I can see along its sheet for miles; there is not so much as the black head of a loon dotting the water."

The Indian gravely raised his paddle, and pointed in the direction in which his own steady look was riveted. Duncan's eyes followed the motion. A few rods in their front lay another of the low wooded islets, but it appeared as calm and peaceful as if its solitude had never been disturbed by the foot of man.

"I see nothing," he said, "but land and water; and a lovely scene it is."

"Hist!" interrupted the scout. "Ay, Sagamore, there is always a reason for what you do. 'Tis but a shade, and yet it is not natural. You see the mist, major, that is rising above the island; you can't call it a fog, for it is more like a streak of thin cloud —"

"It is vapor from the water."

"That a child could tell. But what is the edging of blacker smoke that hangs along its lower side, and which you may trace down into the thicket of hazel? 'Tis from a fire; but one that, in my judgment, has been suffered to burn low."

"Let us then push for the place, and relieve our doubts," said the impatient Duncan; "the party must be small that can

lie on such a bit of land.”

“If you judge of Indian cunning by the rules you find in books, or by white sagacity, they will lead you astray, if not to your death,” returned Hawkeye, examining the signs of the place with that acuteness which distinguished him. “If I may be permitted to speak in this matter, it will be to say, that we have but two things to choose between: the one is, to return, and give up all thoughts of following the Hurons —”

“Never!” exclaimed Heyward, in a voice far too loud for their circumstances.

“Well, well,” continued Hawkeye, making a hasty sign to repress his impatience; “I am much of your mind myself; though I thought it becoming my experience to tell the whole. We must then make a push, and if the Indians or Frenchers are in the narrows, run the gauntlet through these toppling mountains. Is there reason in my words, Sagamore?”

The Indian made no other answer than by dropping his paddle into the water, and urging forward the canoe. As he held the office of directing its course, his resolution was sufficiently indicated by the movement. The whole party now plied their paddles vigorously, and in a very few moments they had reached a point whence they might command an entire view of the northern shore of the island, the side that had hitherto been concealed.

“There they are, by all the truth of signs,” whispered the scout; “two canoes and a smoke. The knaves haven’t yet got their eyes out of the mist, or we should hear the accursed whoop. Together, friend! we are leaving them, and are already nearly out of whistle of a bullet.”

The well known crack of a rifle, whose ball came skipping along the placid surface of the strait, and a shrill yell from the island, interrupted his speech, and announced that their passage was discovered. In another instant several savages were seen rushing into the canoes, which were soon dancing over the water, in pursuit. These fearful precursors of a coming struggle produced no change in the countenances and movements of his three guides, so far as Duncan could discover, except that the strokes of their paddles were longer and more in unison, and caused the little bark to spring forward like a creature possessing life and volition.

“Hold them there, Sagamore,” said Hawkeye, looking coolly backward over his left shoulder, while he still plied his paddle; “keep them just there. Them Hurons have never a piece in their nation that will execute at this distance; but ‘Killdeer’ has a barrel on which a man may calculate.”

The scout having ascertained that the Mohicans were sufficient of themselves to maintain the requisite distance, deliberately laid aside his paddle, and raised the fatal rifle. Three several times he brought the piece to his shoulder, and when his companions were expecting its report, he as often lowered it to request the Indians would permit their enemies to approach a little nigher. At length his accurate and fastidious eye seemed satisfied, and throwing out his left arm on the barrel, he was slowly elevating the muzzle, when an exclamation from Uncas, who sat in the bow, once more caused him to suspend the shot.

“What now, lad?” demanded Hawkeye; “you saved a Huron from the death-shriek by that word; have you reason for what you do?”

Uncas pointed towards the rocky shore a little in their front, whence another war canoe was darting directly across their course. It was too obvious now that their situation was imminently perilous to need the aid of language to confirm it. The scout laid aside his rifle, and resumed the paddle, while Chingachgook inclined the bows of the canoe a little towards the western shore, in order to increase the distance between them and this new enemy. In the meantime they were reminded of the presence of those who pressed upon their rear, by wild and exulting shouts. The stirring scene awakened even Munro from his apathy.

“Let us make for the rocks on the main,” he said, with the mien of a tired soldier, “and give battle to the savages. God forbid that I, or those attached to me and mine, should ever trust again to the faith of any servant of the Louis’s!”

“He who wishes to prosper in Indian warfare,” returned the scout, “must not be too proud to learn from the wit of a native. Lay her more along the land, Sagamore; we are doubling on the varlets, and perhaps they may try to strike our trail on the long calculation.”

Hawkeye was not mistaken; for when the Hurons found their course was likely to throw them behind their chase, they rendered it less direct, until, by gradually bearing more and more obliquely, the two canoes were ere long, gliding on parallel lines, within two hundred yards of each other. It now became entirely a trial of speed. So rapid was the progress of the light vessels, that the lake curled in their front, in miniature waves, and their motion became undulating by its own

velocity. It was, perhaps, owing to this circumstance, in addition to the necessity of keeping every hand employed at the paddles, that the Hurons had not immediate recourse to their fire-arms. The exertions of the fugitives were too severe to continue long, and the pursuers had the advantage of numbers. Duncan observed, with uneasiness, that the scout began to look anxiously about him, as if searching for some further means of assisting their flight.

"Edge her a little more from the sun, Sagamore," said the stubborn woodsman; "I see the knaves are sparing a man to the rifle. A single broken bone might lose us our scalps. Edge more from the sun and we will put the island between us."

The expedient was not without its use. A long, low island lay at a little distance before them, and as they closed with it, the chasing canoe was compelled to take a side opposite to that on which the pursued passed. The scout and his companions did not neglect this advantage, but the instant they were hid from observation by the bushes, they redoubled efforts that before had seemed prodigious. The two canoes came round the last low point, like two coursers at the top of their speed, the fugitives taking the lead. This change had brought them nigher to each other, however, while it altered their relative positions.

"You showed knowledge in the shaping of birchen bark, Uncas, when you chose this from among the Huron canoes," said the scout, smiling, apparently more in satisfaction at their superiority in the race, than from that prospect of final escape which now began to open a little upon them. "The imps have put all their strength again at the paddles, and we are to struggle for our scalps with bits of flattened wood, instead of clouded barrels and true eyes. A long stroke, and together, friends."

"They are preparing for a shot," said Heyward; "and as we are in a line with them, it can scarcely fail."

"Get you then into the bottom of the canoe," returned the scout; "you and the colonel; it will be so much taken from the size of the mark."

Heyward smiled, as he answered —

"It would be but an ill example for the highest in rank to dodge, while the warriors were under fire!"

"Lord! Lord! That is now a white man's courage!" exclaimed the scout; "and like too many of his notions, not to be maintained by reason. Do you think the Sagamore, or Uncas, or even I, who am a man without a cross, would deliberate about finding a cover in the skirmish, when an open body would do no good? For what have the Frenchers reared up their Quebec, if fighting is always to be done in the clearings?"

"All that you say is very true, my friend," replied Heyward; "still, our customs must prevent us from doing as you wish."

A volley from the Hurons interrupted the discourse, and as the bullets whistled about them, Duncan saw the head of Uncas turned, looking back at himself and Munro. Notwithstanding the nearness of the enemy, and his own great personal danger, the countenance of the young warrior expressed no other emotion, as the former was compelled to think, than amazement at finding men willing to encounter so useless an exposure. Chingachgook was probably better acquainted with the notions of white men, for he did not even cast a glance aside from the riveted look his eye maintained on the object by which he governed their course. A ball soon struck the light and polished paddle from the hands of the chief, and drove it through the air, far in the advance. A shout arose from the Hurons, who seized the opportunity to fire another volley. Uncas described an arc in the water with his own blade, and as the canoe passed swiftly on, Chingachgook recovered his paddle, and flourishing it on high, he gave the war-whoop of the Mohicans, and then lent his strength and skill again to the important task. The clamorous sounds of "Le Gros Serpent!"

"La Longue Carabine!"

"Le Cerf Agile!" burst at once from the canoes behind, and seemed to give new zeal to the pursuers.

The scout seized "Killdeer" in his left hand, and elevating it above his head, he shook it in triumph at his enemies. The savages answered the insult with a yell, and immediately another volley succeeded. The bullets pattered along the lake, and one even pierced the bark of their little vessel. No perceptible emotion could be discovered in the Mohicans during this critical moment, their rigid features expressing neither hope nor alarm; but the scout again turned his head, and laughing in his own silent manner, he said to Heyward —

"The knaves love to hear the sounds of their pieces; but the eye is not to be found among the Mingos that can calculate a true range in a dancing canoe! You see the dumb devils have taken off a man to charge, and by the smallest measurement that can be allowed, we move three feet to their two!"

Duncan, who was not altogether as easy under this nice estimate of distances as his companions, was glad to find, however, that owing to their superior dexterity, and the diversion among their enemies, they were very sensibly obtaining the advantage. The Hurons soon fired again, and a bullet struck the blade of Hawkeye's paddle without injury.

"That will do," said the scout, examining the slight indentation with a curious eye; "it would not have cut the skin of an infant, much less of men, who, like us, have been blown upon by the heavens in their anger. Now, major, if you will try to use this piece of flattened wood, I'll let 'Killdeer' take a part in the conversation."

Heyward seized the paddle, and applied himself to the work with an eagerness that supplied the place of skill, while Hawkeye was engaged in inspecting the priming of his rifle. The latter then took a swift aim, and fired. The Huron in the bows of the leading canoe had risen with a similar object, and he now fell backward, suffering his gun to escape from his hands into the water. In an instant, however, he recovered his feet, though his gestures were wild and bewildered. At the same moment his companions suspended their efforts, and the chasing canoes clustered together, and became stationary. Chingachgook and Uncas profited by the interval to regain their wind, though Duncan continued to work with the most persevering industry. The father and son now cast calm but inquiring glances at each other, to learn if either had sustained any injury by the fire; for both well knew that no cry or exclamation would, in such a moment of necessity, have been permitted to betray the accident. A few large drops of blood were trickling down the shoulder of the Sagamore, who, when he perceived that the eyes of Uncas dwelt too long on the sight, raised some water in the hollow of his hand, and washing off the stain, was content to manifest, in this simple manner, the slightness of the injury.

"Softly, softly, major," said the scout, who by this time had reloaded his rifle; "we are a little too far already for a rifle to put forth its beauties, and you see yonder imps are holding a council. Let them come up within striking distance — my eye may well be trusted in such a matter — and I will trail the varlets the length of the Horican, guaranteeing that not a shot of theirs shall, at the worst, more than break the skin, while 'Killdeer' shall touch the life twice in three times."

"We forget our errand," returned the diligent Duncan. "For God's sake let us profit by this advantage, and increase our distance from the enemy."

"Give me my children," said Munro hoarsely; "trifle no longer with a father's agony, but restore me my babes."

Long and habitual deference to the mandates of his superiors had taught the scout the virtue of obedience. Throwing a last and lingering glance at the distant canoes, he laid aside his rifle, and relieving the wearied Duncan, resumed the paddle, which he wielded with sinews that never tired. His efforts were seconded by those of the Mohicans, and a very few minutes served to place such a sheet of water between them and their enemies, that Heyward once more breathed freely.

The lake now began to expand, and their route lay along a wide reach, that was lined, as before, by high and ragged mountains. But the islands were few, and easily avoided. The strokes of the paddles grew more measured and regular, while they who plied them continued their labor, after the close and deadly chase from which they had just relieved themselves, with as much coolness as though their speed had been tried in sport, rather than under such pressing, nay, almost desperate circumstances.

Instead of following the western shore, whither their errand led them, the wary Mohican inclined his course more towards those hills behind which Montcalm was known to have led his army into the formidable fortress of Ticonderoga. As the Hurons, to every appearance, had abandoned the pursuit, there was no apparent reason for this excess of caution. It was, however, maintained for hours, until they had reached a bay, nigh the northern termination of the lake. Here the canoe was driven upon the beach, and the whole party landed. Hawkeye and Heyward ascended an adjacent bluff, where the former, after considering the expanse of water beneath him, pointed out to the latter a small black object, hovering under a headland, at the distance of several miles.

"Do you see it?" demanded the scout. "Now, what would you account that spot, were you left alone to white experience to find your way through this wilderness?"

"But for its distance and its magnitude, I should suppose it a bird. Can it be a living object?"

"Tis a canoe of good birchen bark, and paddled by fierce and crafty Mingos. Though Providence has lent to those who inhabit the woods eyes that would be needless to men in the settlements, where there are inventions to assist the sight, yet no human organs can see all the dangers which at this moment circumvent us. These varlets pretend to be bent chiefly on their sun-down meal, but the moment it is dark they will be on our trail, as true as hounds on the scent. We must throw them off, or our pursuit of *Le Renard Subtil* may be given up. These lakes are useful at times, especially when the game takes the water," continued the scout, gazing about him with a countenance of concern; "but they give no cover, except it be to the fishes. God knows what the country would be, if the settlements should ever spread far from the two rivers. Both hunting and war would lose their beauty."

"Let us not delay a moment, without some good and obvious cause."

"I little like that smoke, which you may see worming up along the rock above the canoe," interrupted the abstracted scout. "My life on it, other eyes than ours see it, and know its meaning. Well, words will not mend the matter, and it is time that we were doing."

Hawkeye moved away from the look-out, and descended, musing profoundly, to the shore. He communicated the result of his observations to his companions, in Delaware, and a short and earnest consultation succeeded. When it terminated, the three instantly set about executing their new resolutions.

The canoe was lifted from the water, and borne on the shoulders of the party. They proceeded into the wood, making as broad and obvious a trail as possible. They soon reached a water-course, which they crossed, and continued onward, until they came to an extensive and naked rock. At this point, where their footsteps might be expected to be no longer visible, they retraced their route to the brook, walking backwards, with the utmost care. They now followed the bed of the little stream to the lake, into which they immediately launched their canoe again. A low point concealed them from the headland, and the margin of the lake was fringed for some distance with dense and overhanging bushes. Under the cover of these natural advantages, they toiled their way, with patient industry, until the scout pronounced that he believed it would be safe once more to land.

The halt continued until evening rendered objects indistinct and uncertain to the eye. Then they resumed their route, and, favored by the darkness, pushed silently and vigorously towards the western shore. Although the rugged outline of mountain, to which they were steering, presented no distinctive marks to the eyes of Duncan, the Mohican entered the little haven he had selected with the confidence and accuracy of an experienced pilot.

The boat was again lifted and borne into the woods where it was carefully concealed under a pile of brush. The adventurers assumed their arms and packs, and the scout announced to Munro and Heyward that he and the Indians were at last in readiness to proceed.



## CHAPTER 21

*"If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death."*

—MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

The party had landed on the border of a region that is, even to this day, less known to the inhabitants of the States, than the deserts of Arabia, or the steppes of Tartary. It was the sterile and rugged district which separates the tributaries of Champlain from those of the Hudson, the Mohawk, and the St. Lawrence. Since the period of our tale, the active spirit of the country has surrounded it with a belt of rich and thriving settlements, though none but the hunter or the savage is ever known, even now, to penetrate its wild recesses.

As Hawkeye and the Mohicans had, however, often traversed the mountains and valleys of this vast wilderness, they did not hesitate to plunge into its depths, with the freedom of men accustomed to its privations and difficulties. For many hours the travellers toiled on their laborious way, guided by a star, or following the direction of some water-course, until the scout called a halt, and holding a short consultation with the Indians, they lighted their fire, and made the usual preparations to pass the remainder of the night where they then were.

Imitating the example, and emulating the confidence, of their more experienced associates, Munro and Duncan slept without fear, if not without uneasiness. The dews were suffered to exhale, and the sun dispersed the mists, and was shedding a strong and clear light in the forest, when the travellers resumed their journey.

After proceeding a few miles, the progress of Hawkeye, who led the advance, became more deliberate and watchful. He often stopped to examine the trees; nor did he cross a rivulet, without attentively considering the quantity, the velocity, and the color of its waters. Distrusting his own judgment his appeals to the opinion of Chingachgook were frequent and earnest. During one of these conferences, Heyward observed that Uncas stood a patient and silent, though, as he imagined, an interested listener. He was strongly tempted to address the young chief, and demand his opinion of their progress; but the calm and dignified demeanor of the native induced him to believe that, like himself, the other was wholly dependent on the sagacity and intelligence of the seniors of the party. At last, the scout spoke in English, and at once explained the embarrassment of their situation.

"When I found that the home path of the Hurons run north," he said, "it did not need the judgment of many long years to tell that they would follow the valleys, and keep atween the waters of the Hudson and the Horicana, until they might strike the springs of the Canada streams, which would lead them into the heart of the country of the Frenchers. Yet here are we, within a short range of the Scaroon, and not a sign of a trail have we crossed! Human nature is weak, and it is possible we may not have taken the proper scent."

"Heaven protect us from such an error!" exclaimed Duncan. "Let us retrace our steps, and examine as we go, with keener eyes. Has Uncas no counsel to offer in such a strait?"

The young Mohican cast a glance at his father, but maintaining his quiet and reserved mien, he continued silent. Chingachgook had caught the look, and motioning with his hand, he bade him speak. The moment this permission was accorded, the countenance of Uncas changed from its grave composure to a gleam of intelligence and joy. Bounding forward like a deer, he sprang up the side of a little acclivity, a few rods in advance, and stood exultingly over a spot of fresh earth that looked as though it had been recently upturned by the passage of some heavy animal. The eyes of the whole party followed the unexpected movement, and read their success in the air of triumph that the youth assumed.

"Tis the trail!" exclaimed the scout, advancing to the spot: "the lad is quick of sight and keen of wit for his years."

"Tis extraordinary that he should have withheld his knowledge so long," muttered Duncan, at his elbow.

"It would have been more wonderful had he spoken without a bidding. No, no; your young white, who gathers his learning from books and can measure what he knows by the page, may conceit that his knowledge, like his legs, outruns that of his father; but where experience is the master, the scholar is made to know the value of years, and respects them accordingly."

"See!" said Uncas, pointing north and south, at the evident marks of the broad trail on either side of him: "the dark-hair has gone towards the frost."



“Hound never ran on a more beautiful scent,” responded the scout, dashing forward, at once, on the indicated route; “we are favored, greatly favored, and can follow with high noses. Ay, here are both your waddling beasts: this Huron travels like a white general. The fellow is stricken with a judgment, and is mad! Look sharp for wheels, Sagamore,” he continued, looking back, and laughing in his newly awakened satisfaction; “we shall soon have the fool journeying in a coach, and that with three of the best pair of eyes on the borders, in his rear.”

The spirits of the scout, and the astonishing success of the chase, in which a circuitous distance of more than forty miles had been passed, did not fail to impart a portion of hope to the whole party. Their advance was rapid; and made with as much confidence as a traveller would proceed along a wide highway. If a rock, or a rivulet, or a bit of earth harder than common, severed the links of the clue they followed, the true eye of the scout recovered them at a distance, and seldom rendered the delay of a single moment necessary. Their progress was much facilitated by the certainty that Magua had found it necessary to journey through the valleys; a circumstance which rendered the general direction of the route sure. Nor had the Huron entirely neglected the arts uniformly practised by the natives when retiring in front of any enemy. False trails, and sudden turnings, were frequent, wherever a brook, or the formation of the ground, rendered them feasible; but his pursuers were rarely deceived, and never failed to detect their error, before they had lost either time or distance on the deceptive track.

By the middle of the afternoon they had passed the Scaroon, and were following the route of the declining sun. After descending an eminence to a low bottom, through which a stream glided, they suddenly came to a place where the party of Le Renard had made a halt. Extinguished brands were lying around a spring, the offals of a deer were scattered about the place, and the trees bore evident marks of having been browsed by the horses. At a little distance, Heyward discovered, and contemplated with tender emotion, the small bower under which he was fain to believe that Cora and Alice had reposed. But while the earth was trodden, and the footsteps of both men and beasts were so plainly visible around the place, the trail appeared to have suddenly ended.

It was easy to follow the track of the Narragansetts, but they seemed only to have wandered without guides, or any other object than the pursuit of food. At length Uncas, who, with his father, had endeavored to trace the route of the horses, came upon a sign of their presence that was quite recent. Before following the clue, he communicated his success to his companions; and while the latter were consulting on the circumstance, the youth reappeared, leading the two fillies, with their saddles broken, and the housings soiled, as though they had been permitted to run at will for several days.

“What should this mean?” said Duncan, turning pale, and glancing his eyes around him, as if he feared the brush and leaves were about to give up some horrid secret.

“That our march is come to a quick end, and that we are in an enemy’s country,” returned the scout. “Had the knaves been pressed, and the gentle ones wanted horses to keep up with the party, he might have taken their scalps; but without an enemy at his heels, and with such rugged beasts as these, he would not hurt a hair of their heads. I know your thoughts, and shame be it to our color that you have reason for them; but he who thinks that even a Mingo would ill-treat a woman, unless it be to tomahawk her, knows nothing of Indian nature, or the laws of the woods. No, no; I have heard that the French Indians had come into these hills, to hunt the moose, and we are getting within scent of their camp. Why should they not? the morning and evening guns of Ty may be heard any day among these mountains; for the Frenchers are running a new line between the provinces of the king and the Canadas. It is true that the horses are here, but the Hurons are gone; let us then hunt for the path by which they departed.”

Hawkeye and the Mohicans now applied themselves to their task in good earnest. A circle of a few hundred feet in circumference was drawn, and each of the party took a segment for his portion. The examination, however, resulted in no discovery. The impressions of footsteps were numerous, but they all appeared like those of men who had wandered about the spot, without any design to quit it. Again the scout and his companions made the circuit of the halting-place, each slowly following the other, until they assembled in the centre once more, no wiser than when they started.

“Such cunning is not without its devilry,” exclaimed Hawkeye, when he met the disappointed looks of his assistants.

“We must get down to it, Sagamore, beginning at the spring, and going over the ground by inches. The Huron shall never brag in his tribe that he has a foot which leaves no print.”

Setting the example himself, the scout engaged in the scrutiny with renewed zeal. Not a leaf was left unturned. The sticks were removed, and the stones lifted; for Indian cunning was known frequently to adopt these objects as covers,

laboring with the utmost patience and industry, to conceal each footstep as they proceeded. Still no discovery was made. At length Uncas, whose activity had enabled him to achieve his portion of the task the soonest, raked the earth across the turbid little rill which ran from the spring, and diverted its course into another channel. So soon as its narrow bed below the dam was dry, he stooped over it with keen and curious eyes. A cry of exultation immediately announced the success of the young warrior. The whole party crowded to the spot where Uncas pointed out the impression of a moccasin in the moist alluvion.

"The lad will be an honor to his people," said Hawkeye, regarding the trail with as much admiration as a naturalist would expend on the tusk of a mammoth or the rib of a mastodon; "ay, and a thorn in the sides of the Hurons. Yet that is not the footstep of an Indian! the weight is too much on the heel, and the toes are squared, as though one of the French dancers had been in, pigeon-winged his tribe! Run back, Uncas, and bring me the size of the singer's foot. You will find a beautiful print of it just opposite yon rock, agin the hillside."

While the youth was engaged in this commission, the scout and Chingachgook were attentively considering the impressions. The measurements agreed, and the former unhesitatingly pronounced that the footstep was that of David, who had once more, been made to exchange his shoes for moccasins.

"I can now read the whole of it, as plainly as if I had seen the arts of Le Subtil," he added; "the singer, being a man whose gifts lay chiefly in his throat and feet, was made to go first, and the others have trod in his steps, imitating their formation."

"But," cried Duncan, "I see no signs of —"

"The gentle ones," interrupted the scout; "the varlet has found a way to carry them, until he supposed he had thrown any followers off the scent. My life on it, we see their pretty little feet again, before many rods go by."

The whole party now proceeded, following the course of the rill, keeping anxious eyes on the regular impressions. The water soon flowed into its bed again, but watching the ground on either side, the foresters pursued their way content with knowing that the trail lay beneath. More than half a mile was passed, before the rill rippled close around the base of an extensive and dry rock. Here they paused to make sure that the Hurons had not quitted the water.

It was fortunate they did so. For the quick and active Uncas soon found the impression of a foot on a bunch of moss, where it would seem an Indian had inadvertently trodden. Pursuing the direction given by this discovery, he entered the neighboring thicket, and struck the trail, as fresh and obvious as it had been before they reached the spring. Another shout announced the good fortune of the youth to his companions, and at once terminated the search.

"Ay, it has been planned with Indian judgment," said the scout, when the party was assembled around the place; "and would have blinded white eyes."

"Shall we proceed?" demanded Heyward.

"Softly, softly: we know our path; but it is good to examine the formation of things. This is my schooling, major; and if one neglects the book, there is little chance of learning from the open hand of Providence. All is plain but one thing, which is the manner that the knave contrived to get the gentle ones along the blind trail. Even a Huron would be too proud to let their tender feet touch the water."

"Will this assist in explaining the difficulty?" said Heyward, pointing towards the fragments of a sort of handbarrow, that had been rudely constructed of boughs, and bound together with withes, and which now seemed carelessly cast aside as useless.

"'Tis explained!" cried the delighted Hawkeye. "If them varlets have passed a minute, they have spent hours in striving to fabricate a lying end to their trail! Well, I've known them to waste a day in the same manner, to as little purpose. Here we have three pair of moccasins, and two of little feet. It is amazing that any mortal beings can journey on limbs so small! Pass me the thong of buckskin, Uncas, and let me take the length of this foot. By the Lord, it is no longer than a child's and yet the maidens are tall and comely. That Providence is partial in its gifts, for its own wise reasons, the best and most contented of us must allow."

"The tender limbs of my daughters are unequal to these hardships," said Munro, looking at the light footsteps of his children, with a parent's love: "we shall find their fainting forms in this desert."

"Of that there is little cause of fear," returned the scout, slowly shaking his head; "this is a firm and straight, though a light step, and not over long. See, the heel has hardly touched the ground; and there the dark-hair has made a little jump,

from root to root. No, no; my knowledge for it, neither of them was nigh fainting, hereaway. Now, the singer was beginning to be foot-sore and leg-weary as is plain by his trail. There, you see, he slipped; here he has travelled wide, and tottered; and there, again, it looks as though he journeyed on snow-shoes. Ay, ay, a man who uses his throat altogether, can hardly give his legs a proper training."

From such undeniable testimony did the practised woodsman arrive at the truth, with nearly as much certainty and precision as if he had been a witness of all those events which his ingenuity so easily elucidated. Cheered by these assurances, and satisfied by a reasoning that was so obvious, while it was so simple, the party resumed its course, after making a short halt to take a hurried repast.

When the meal was ended, the scout cast a glance upwards at the setting sun, and pushed forward with a rapidity which compelled Heyward and the still vigorous Munro to exert all their muscles to equal. Their route now lay along the bottom which had already been mentioned. As the Hurons had made no further efforts to conceal their footsteps, the progress of the pursuers was no longer delayed by uncertainty. Before an hour had elapsed, however, the speed of Hawkeye sensibly abated, and his head, instead of maintaining its former direct and forward look, began to turn suspiciously from side to side, as if he were conscious of approaching danger. He soon stopped again, and waited for the whole party to come up.

"I scent the Hurons," he said, speaking to the Mohicans; "yonder is open sky, through the tree-tops, and we are getting too nigh their encampment. Sagamore, you will take the hillside, to the right; Uncas will bend along the brook to the left, while I will try the trail. If anything should happen, the call will be three croaks of a crow. I saw one of the birds fanning himself in the air, just beyond the dead oak — another sign that we are touching an encampment."

The Indians departed their several ways without reply, while Hawkeye cautiously proceeded with the two gentlemen. Heyward soon pressed to the side of their guide, eager to catch an early glimpse of those enemies he had pursued with so much toil and anxiety. His companion told him to steal to the edge of the wood, which, as usual, was fringed with a thicket, and wait his coming, for he wished to examine certain suspicious signs a little on one side. Duncan obeyed, and soon found himself in a situation to command a view which he found as extraordinary as it was novel.

The trees of many acres had been felled, and the glow of a mild summer's evening had fallen on the clearing, in beautiful contrast to the gray light of the forest. A short distance from the place where Duncan stood, the stream had seemingly expanded into a little lake, covering most of the low land, from mountain to mountain. The water fell out of this wide basin, in a cataract so regular and gentle, that it appeared rather to be the work of human hands, than fashioned by nature. A hundred earthen dwellings stood on the margin of the lake, and even in its water, as though the latter had overflowed its usual banks. Their rounded roofs, admirably moulded for defence against the weather, denoted more of industry and foresight than the natives were wont to bestow on their regular habitations, much less on those they occupied for the temporary purposes of hunting and war. In short, the whole village or town, whichever it might be termed, possessed more of method and neatness of execution, than the white men had been accustomed to believe belonged, ordinarily, to the Indian habits. It appeared, however, to be deserted. At least, so thought Duncan for many minutes; but, at length, he fancied he discovered several human forms advancing towards him on all fours, and apparently dragging in their train some heavy, and as he was quick to apprehend, some formidable engine. Just then a few dark looking heads gleamed out of the dwellings, and the place seemed suddenly alive with beings, which, however, glided from cover to cover so swiftly, as to allow no opportunity of examining their humors or pursuits. Alarmed at these suspicious and inexplicable movements, he was about to attempt the signal of the crows, when the rustling of leaves at hand drew his eyes in another direction.

The young man started, and recoiled a few paces instinctively, when he found himself within a hundred yards of a stranger Indian. Recovering his recollection on the instant, instead of sounding an alarm, which might prove fatal to himself, he remained stationary, an attentive observer of the other's motions.

An instant of calm observation served to assure Duncan that he was undiscovered. The native, like himself, seemed occupied in considering the low dwellings of the village, and the stolen movements of its inhabitants. It was impossible to discover the expression of his features, through the grotesque mask of paint under which they were concealed; though Duncan fancied it was rather melancholy than savage. His head was shaved, as usual, with the exception of the crown, from whose tuft three or four faded feathers from a hawk's wing were loosely dangling. A ragged calico mantle half-encircled his body, while his nether garment was composed of an ordinary shirt, the sleeves of which were made to

perform the office that is usually executed by a much more commodious arrangement. His legs were bare, and sadly cut and torn by briars. The feet were, however, covered with a pair of good deer-skin moccasins. Altogether, the appearance of the individual was forlorn and miserable.

Duncan was still curiously observing the person of his neighbor, when the scout stole silently and cautiously to his side.

"You see we have reached their settlement or encampment," whispered the young man; "and here is one of the savages himself, in a very embarrassing position for our further movements."

Hawkeye started, and dropped his rifle, directed by the finger of his companion, the stranger came under his view. Then lowering the dangerous muzzle, he stretched forward his long neck, as if to assist a scrutiny that was already intensely keen.

"The imp is not a Huron," he said, "nor of any of the Canada tribes; and yet you see, by his clothes, the knave has been plundering a white. Ay, Montcalm has raked the woods for his inroad, and a whooping, murdering set of varlets has gathered together. Can you see where he has put his rifle or his bow?"

"He appears to have no arms; nor does he seem to be viciously inclined. Unless he communicate the alarm to his fellows, who as you see are dodging about the water, we have but little to fear from him."

The scout turned to Heyward, and regarded him a moment with unconcealed amazement. Then opening wide his mouth, he indulged in unrestrained and heartfelt laughter, though in that silent and peculiar manner which danger had so long taught him to practise.

Repeating the words, "fellows who are dodging about the water!" he added, "so much for schooling and passing a boyhood in the settlements! The knave has long legs, though, and shall not be trusted. Do you keep him under your rifle while I creep in behind, through the bush, and take him alive. Fire on no account."

Heyward had already permitted his companion to bury part of his person in the thicket, when, stretching forth an arm, he arrested him, in order to ask —

"If I see you in danger, may I not risk a shot?"

Hawkeye regarded him a moment, like one who knew not how to take the question; then nodding his head, he answered, still laughing, though inaudibly —

"Fire a whole platoon, major."

In the next moment he was concealed by the leaves. Duncan waited several minutes in feverish impatience, before he caught another glimpse of the scout. Then he reappeared, creeping along the earth, from which his dress was hardly distinguishable, directly in the rear of his intended captive. Having reached within a few yards of the latter, he arose to his feet, silently and slowly. At that instant, several loud blows were struck on the water, and Duncan turned his eyes just in time to perceive that a hundred dark forms were plunging, in a body, into the troubled little sheet. Grasping his rifle, his looks were again bent on the Indian near him. Instead of taking the alarm, the unconscious savage stretched forward his neck, as if he also watched the movements about the gloomy lake, with a sort of silly curiosity. In the meantime, the uplifted hand of Hawkeye was above him. But, without any apparent reason, it was withdrawn, and its owner indulged in another long, though still silent, fit of merriment. When the peculiar and hearty laughter of Hawkeye was ended, instead of grasping his victim by the throat, he tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and exclaimed aloud —

"How now, friend! have you a mind to teach the beavers to sing?"

"Even so," was the ready answer. "It would seem that the Being that gave them power to improve his gifts so well, would not deny them voices to proclaim his praise."



## CHAPTER 22

"BOT.— *Are we all met?*"

"QUI.— *Pat — pat; and here's a marvellous Convenient place for our rehearsal.*"

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

The reader may better imagine, than we describe, the surprise of Heyward. His lurking Indians were suddenly converted into four-footed beasts; his lake into a beaver pond; his cataract into a dam, constructed by those industrious and ingenious quadrupeds; and a suspected enemy into his tried friend, David Gamut, the master of psalmody. The presence of the latter created so many unexpected hopes relative to the sisters that, without a moment's hesitation, the young man broke out of his ambush, and sprang forward to join the two principal actors in the scene.

The merriment of Hawkeye was not easily appeased. Without ceremony, and with a rough hand, he twirled the supple Gamut around on his heel, and more than once affirmed that the Hurons had done themselves great credit in the fashion of his costume. Then seizing the hand of the other, he squeezed it with a gripe that brought the tears into the eyes of the placid David, and wished him joy of his new condition.

"You were about opening your throat-practysings among the beavers, were ye?" he said. "The cunning devils know half the trade already, for they beat the time with their tails, as you heard just now; and in good time it was too, or 'Killdeer' might have sounded the first note among them. I have known greater fools, who could read and write, than an experienced old beaver; but as for squalling, the animals are born dumb! What think you of such a song as this?"

David shut his sensitive ears, and even Heyward, apprised as he was of the nature of the cry, looked upwards in quest of the bird, as the cawing of a crow rang in the air about them.

"See!" continued the laughing scout, as he pointed towards the remainder of the party, who, in obedience to the signal, were already approaching: "this is music which has its natural virtues; it brings two good rifles to my elbow, to say nothing of the knives and tomahawks. But we see that you are safe; now tell us what has become of the maidens."

"They are captives to the heathen," said David; "and though greatly troubled in spirit, enjoying comfort and safety in the body."

"Both?" demanded the breathless Heyward.

"Even so. Though our wayfaring has been sore and our sustenance scanty, we have had little other cause for complaint, except the violence done our feelings, by being thus led in captivity into a far land."

"Bless ye for these very words!" exclaimed the trembling Munro; "I shall then receive my babes spotless and angel-like, as I lost them!"

"I know not that their delivery is at hand," returned the doubting David; "the leader of these savages is possessed of an evil spirit that no power short of Omnipotence can tame. I have tried him sleeping and waking, but neither sounds nor language seem to touch his soul."

"Where is the knave?" bluntly interrupted the scout.

"He hunts the moose to-day, with his young men; and to-morrow, as I hear, they pass farther into these forests, and nigher to the borders of Canada. The elder maiden is conveyed to a neighboring people, whose lodges are situate beyond yonder black pinnacle of rock; while the younger is detained among the women of the Hurons, whose dwellings are but two short miles hence, on a table-land, where the fire has done the office of the axe, and prepared the place for their reception."

"Alice, my gentle Alice!" murmured Heyward; "she has lost the consolation of her sister's presence!"

"Even so. But so far as praise and thanksgiving in psalmody can temper the spirit in affliction, she has not suffered."

"Has she then a heart for music?"

"Of the graver and more solemn character; though it must be acknowledged that, in spite of all my endeavors, the maiden weeps oftener than she smiles. At such moments I forbear to press the holy songs; but there are many sweet and comfortable periods of satisfactory communication, when the ears of the savages are astounded with the upliftings of our voices."

"And why are you permitted to go at large, unwatched?"

David composed his features into what he intended should express an air of modest humility, before he meekly replied —

“Little be the praise to such a worm as I. But, though the power of psalmody was suspended in the terrible business of that field of blood through which we passed, it has recovered its influence even over the souls of the heathen, and I am suffered to go and come at will.”

The scout laughed, and tapping his own forehead significantly, he perhaps explained the singular indulgence more satisfactorily when he said —

“The Indians never harm a non-composser. But why, when the path lay open before your eyes, did you not strike back on your own trail (it is not so blind as that which a squirrel would make), and bring in the tidings to Edward?”

The scout, remembering only his own sturdy and iron nature, had probably exacted a task that David, under no circumstances, could have performed. But, without entirely losing the meekness of his air, the latter was content to answer —

“Though my soul would rejoice to visit the habitations of Christendom once more, my feet would rather follow the tender spirits intrusted to my keeping, even into the idolatrous province of the Jesuits, than take one step backward, while they pined in captivity and sorrow.”

Though the figurative language of David was not very intelligible, the sincere and steady expression of his eye, and the glow on his honest countenance, were not easily mistaken. Uncas pressed closer to his side, and regarded the speaker with a look of commendation, while his father expressed his satisfaction by the ordinary pithy exclamation of approbation. The scout shook his head as he rejoined —

“The Lord never intended that the man should place all his endeavors in his throat, to the neglect of other and better gifts! But he has fallen into the hands of some silly woman, when he should have been gathering his education under a blue sky, among the beauties of the forest. Here, friend; I did intend to kindle a fire with this tooting whistle of thine; but as you value the thing, take it, and blow your best on it!”

Gamut received his pitch-pipe with as strong an expression of pleasure as he believed compatible with the grave functions he exercised. After essaying its virtues repeatedly, in contrast with his own voice, and satisfying himself that none of its melody was lost, he made a very serious demonstration towards achieving a few stanzas of one of the longest effusions in the little volume so often mentioned.

Heyward, however, hastily interrupted his pious purpose, by continuing questions concerning the past and present condition of his fellow-captives, and in a manner more methodical than had been permitted by his feelings in the opening of their interview. David, though he regarded his treasure with longing eyes, was constrained to answer: especially as the venerable father took a part in the interrogatories, with an interest too imposing to be denied. Nor did the scout fail to throw in a pertinent inquiry, whenever a fitting occasion presented. In this manner, though with frequent interruptions, which were filled with certain threatening sounds from the recovered instrument, the pursuers were put in possession of such leading circumstances as were likely to prove useful in accomplishing their great and engrossing object — the recovery of the sisters. The narrative of David was simple, and the facts but few.

Magua had waited on the mountain until a safe moment to retire presented itself, when he had descended, and taken the route along the western side of the Horican, in the direction of the Canadas. As the subtle Huron was familiar with the paths, and well knew there was no immediate danger of pursuit, their progress had been moderate, and far from fatiguing. It appeared from the unembellished statement of David, that his own presence had been rather endured than desired; though even Magua had not been entirely exempt from that veneration with which the Indians regard those whom the Great Spirit has visited in their intellects. At night, the utmost care had been taken of the captives, both to prevent injury from the damps of the woods, and to guard against an escape. At the spring, the horses were turned loose, as has been seen; and notwithstanding the remoteness and length of their trail, the artifices already named were resorted to, in order to cut off every clue to their place of retreat. On their arrival at the encampment of his people, Magua, in obedience to a policy seldom departed from, separated his prisoners. Cora had been sent to a tribe that temporarily occupied an adjacent valley, though David was too ignorant of the customs and history of the natives to be able to declare anything satisfactory concerning their name or character. He only knew that they had not engaged in the late expedition against William Henry; that, like the Hurons themselves, they were allies of Montcalm; and that they maintained an amicable, though a watchful

intercourse with the warlike and savage people, whom chance had, for a time, brought in such close and disagreeable contact with themselves.

The Mohicans and the scout listened to his interrupted and imperfect narrative, with an interest that obviously increased as he proceeded; and it was while attempting to explain the pursuits of the community in which Cora was detained, that the latter abruptly demanded —

“Did you see the fashion of their knives? Were they of English or French formation?”

“My thoughts were bent on no such vanities, but rather mingled in consolation with those of the maidens.”

“The time may come when you will not consider the knife of a savage such a despicable vanity,” returned the scout, with a strong expression of contempt for the other’s dulness. “Had they held their corn-feast — or can you say anything of the totems of the tribe?”

“Of corn, we had many and plentiful feasts; for the grain, being in the milk, is both sweet to the mouth and comfortable to the stomach. Of totem, I know not the meaning; but if it appertaineth in any wise to the art of Indian music, it need not be inquired after at their hands. They never join their voices in praise, and it would seem that they are among the profanest of the idolatrous.”

“Therein you belie the nature of an Indian. Even the Mingo adores but the true and living God. ’Tis a wicked fabrication of the whites, and I say it to the shame of my color, that would make the warrior bow down before images of his own creation. It is true, they endeavor to make truces with the wicked one — as who would not with an enemy he cannot conquer! — but they look up for favor and assistance to the Great and Good Spirit only.”

“It may be so,” said David; “but I have seen strange and fantastic images drawn in their paint, of which their admiration and care savored of spiritual pride; especially one, and that, too, a foul and loathsome object.”

“Was it a serpent?” quickly demanded the scout.

“Much the same. It was in the likeness of an abject and creeping tortoise.”

“Hugh!” exclaimed both the attentive Mohicans in a breath; while the scout shook his head with an air of one who had made an important, but by no means a pleasing discovery. Then the father spoke, in the language of the Delawares, and with a calmness and dignity that instantly arrested the attention even of those to whom his words were unintelligible. His gestures were impressive, and at times energetic. Once he lifted his arm on high; and as it descended, the action threw aside the folds of his light mantle, a finger resting on his breast, as if he would enforce his meaning by the attitude. Duncan’s eyes followed the movement, and he perceived that the animal just mentioned was beautifully, though faintly, worked in a blue tint, on the swarthy breast of the chief. All that he had ever heard of the violent separation of the vast tribes of the Delawares rushed across his mind, and he awaited the proper moment to speak, with a suspense that was rendered nearly intolerable, by his interest in the stake. His wish, however, was anticipated by the scout, who turned from his red friend, saying —

“We have found that which may be good or evil to us, as Heaven disposes. The Sagamore is of the high blood of the Delawares, and is the great chief of their Tortoises! That some of this stock are among the people of whom the singer tells us, is plain, by his words; and had he but spent half the breath in prudent questions, that he has blown away in making a trumpet of his throat, we might have known how many warriors they numbered. It is, altogether, a dangerous path we move in; for a friend whose face is turned from you often bears a bloodier mind than the enemy who seeks your scalp.”

“Explain,” said Duncan.

“’Tis a long and melancholy tradition, and one I little like to think of; for it is not to be denied, that the evil has been mainly done by men with white skins. But it has ended in turning the tomahawk of brother against brother, and brought the Mingo and the Delaware to travel in the same path.”

“You then suspect it is a portion of that people among whom Cora resides?”

The scout nodded his head in assent, though he seemed anxious to waive the further discussion of a subject that appeared painful. The impatient Duncan now made several hasty and desperate propositions to attempt the release of the sisters. Munro seemed to shake off his apathy, and listened to the wild schemes of the young man with a deference that his gray hairs and reverend years should have denied. But the scout, after suffering the ardor of the lover to expend itself a little, found means to convince him of the folly of precipitation, in a matter that would require their coolest judgment and utmost fortitude.

"It would be well," he added, "to let this man go in again, as usual, and for him to tarry in the lodges, giving notice to the gentle ones of our approach, until we call him out, by signal, to consult. You know the cry of a crow, friend, from the whistle of the whippoorwill?"

"Tis a pleasing bird," returned David, "and has a soft and melancholy note! though the time is rather quick and ill-measured."

"He speaks of the wish-ton-wish," said the scout; "well, since you like his whistle, it shall be your signal. Remember, then, when you hear the whippoorwill's call three times repeated, you are to come into the bushes where the bird might be supposed —"

"Stop," interrupted Heyward; "I will accompany him."

"You!" exclaimed the astonished Hawkeye; "are you tired of seeing the sun rise and set?"

"David is a living proof that the Hurons can be merciful."

"Ay, but David can use his throat, as no man in his senses would pervert the gift."

"I, too, can play the madman, the fool, the hero; in short, any or everything to rescue her I love. Name your objections no longer; I am resolved."

Hawkeye regarded the young man a moment in speechless amazement. But Duncan, who, in deference to the other's skill and services, had hitherto submitted somewhat implicitly to his dictation, now assumed the superior, with a manner that was not easily resisted. He waved his hand, in sign of his dislike to all remonstrance, and then, in more tempered language, he continued —

"You have the means of disguise; change me; paint me, too, if you will; in short, alter me to anything — a fool."

"It is not for one like me to say that he who is already formed by so powerful a hand as Providence, stands in need of a change," muttered the discontented scout. "When you send your parties abroad in war, you find it prudent, at least, to arrange the marks and places of encampment, in order that they who fight on your side may know when and where to expect a friend."

"Listen," interrupted Duncan; "you have heard from this faithful follower of the captives, that the Indians are of two tribes, if not of different nations. With one, whom you think to be a branch of the Delawares, is she you call the 'dark-hair'; the other, and younger of the ladies, is undeniably with our declared enemies, the Hurons. It becomes my youth and rank to attempt the latter adventure. While you, therefore, are negotiating with your friends for the release of one of the sisters, I will effect that of the other, or die."

The awakened spirit of the young soldier gleamed in his eyes, and his form became imposing under its influence. Hawkeye, though too much accustomed to Indian artifices not to foresee the danger of the experiment, knew not well how to combat this sudden resolution.

Perhaps there was something in the proposal that suited his own hardy nature, and that secret love of desperate adventure, which had increased with his experience, until hazard and danger had become, in some measure, necessary to the enjoyment of his existence. Instead of continuing to oppose the scheme of Duncan, his humor suddenly altered, and he lent himself to its execution.

"Come," he said, with a good-humored smile; "the buck that will take to the water must be headed, and not followed. Chingachgook has as many different paints as the engineer officer's wife, who takes down nature on scraps of paper, making the mountains look like cocks of rusty hay, and placing the blue sky in reach of your hand. The Sagamore can use them, too. Seat yourself on the log; and my life on it, he can soon make a natural fool of you, and that well to your liking."

Duncan complied; and the Mohican, who had been an attentive listener to the discourse, readily undertook the office. Long practised in all the subtle arts of his race, he drew, with great dexterity and quickness, the fantastic shadow that the natives were accustomed to consider as the evidence of a friendly and jocular disposition. Every line that could possibly be interpreted into a secret inclination for war, was carefully avoided; while, on the other hand, he studied those conceits that might be construed into amity.

In short, he entirely sacrificed every appearance of the warrior to the masquerade of a buffoon. Such exhibitions were not uncommon among the Indians; and as Duncan was already sufficiently disguised in his dress, there certainly did exist some reason for believing that, with his knowledge of French, he might pass for a juggler from Ticonderoga, straggling



among the allied and friendly tribes.

When he was thought to be sufficiently painted, the scout gave him much friendly advice; concerted signals, and appointed the place where they should meet, in the event of mutual success. The parting between Munro and his young friend was more melancholy; still, the former submitted to the separation with an indifference that his warm and honest nature would never have permitted in a more healthful state of mind. The scout led Heyward aside, and acquainted him with his intention to leave the veteran in some safe encampment, in charge of Chingachgook, while he and Uncas pursued their inquiries among the people they had reason to believe were Delawares. Then renewing his cautions and advice, he concluded by saying, with a solemnity and warmth of feeling, with which Duncan was deeply touched:

“And now God bless you! You have shown a spirit that I like; for it is the gift of youth, more especially one of warm blood and a stout heart. But believe the warning of a man who has reason to know all he says to be true. You will have occasion for your best manhood, and for a sharper wit than what is to be gathered in books, afore you outdo the cunning, or get the better of the courage of a Mingo. God bless you! if the Hurons master your scalp, rely on the promise of one who has two stout warriors to back him. They shall pay for their victory, with a life for every hair it holds. I say, young gentleman, may Providence bless your undertaking, which is altogether for good; and remember, that to outwit the knaves it is lawful to practise things that may not be naturally the gift of a white skin.”

Duncan shook his worthy and reluctant associate warmly by the hand, once more recommended his aged friend to his care, and returning his good wishes, he motioned to David to proceed. Hawkeye gazed after the high-spirited and adventurous young man for several moments, in open admiration; then shaking his head doubtingly, he turned, and led his own division of the party into the concealment of the forest.

The route taken by Duncan and David lay directly across the clearing of the beavers, and along the margin of their pond.

When the former found himself alone with one so simple, and so little qualified to render any assistance in desperate emergencies, he first began to be sensible of the difficulties of the task he had undertaken. The fading light increased the gloominess of the bleak and savage wilderness that stretched so far on every side of him; and there was even a fearful character in the stillness of those little huts, that he knew were so abundantly peopled. It struck him, as he gazed at the admirable structures and the wonderful precautions of their sagacious inmates, that even the brutes of these vast wilds were possessed of an instinct nearly commensurate with his own reason; and he could not reflect, without anxiety, on the unequal contest that he had so rashly courted. Then came the glowing image of Alice; her distress; her actual danger; and all the peril of his situation was forgotten. Cheering David, he moved on with the light and vigorous step of youth and enterprise.

After making nearly a semicircle around the pond, they diverged from the water-course, and began to ascend to the level of a slight elevation in that bottom land, over which they journeyed. Within half an hour they gained the margin of another opening that bore all the signs of having been also made by the beavers, and which those sagacious animals had probably been induced, by some accident, to abandon, for the more eligible position they now occupied. A very natural sensation caused Duncan to hesitate a moment, unwilling to leave the cover of their bushy path, as a man pauses to collect his energies before he essays any hazardous experiment, in which he is secretly conscious they will all be needed. He profited by the halt, to gather such information as might be obtained from his short and hasty glances.

On the opposite side of the clearing, and near the point where the brook tumbled over some rocks, from a still higher level, some fifty or sixty lodges, rudely fabricated of logs, brush, and earth intermingled, were to be discovered. They were arranged without any order, and seemed to be constructed with very little attention to neatness or beauty. Indeed, so very inferior were they in the two latter particulars to the village Duncan had just seen, that he began to expect a second surprise, no less astonishing than the former. This expectation was in no degree diminished, when, by the doubtful twilight, he beheld twenty or thirty forms rising alternately from the cover of the tall, coarse grass, in front of the lodges, and then sinking again from the sight, as it were to burrow in the earth. By the sudden and hasty glimpses that he caught of these figures, they seemed more like dark glancing spectres, or some other unearthly beings, than creatures fashioned with the ordinary and vulgar materials of flesh and blood. A gaunt, naked form was seen, for a single instant, tossing its arms wildly in the air, and then the spot it had filled was vacant; the figure appearing suddenly in some other and distant place, or being succeeded by another, possessing the same mysterious character. David, observing that his companion lingered, pursued the direction of his gaze, and in some measure recalled the recollection of Heyward, by speaking.

"There is much fruitful soil uncultivated here," he said; "and I may add, without the sinful leaven of self-commendation, that since my short sojourn in these heathenish abodes, much good seed has been scattered by the wayside."

"The tribes are fonder of the chase than of the arts of men of labor," returned the unconscious Duncan, still gazing at the objects of his wonder.

"It is rather joy than labor to the spirit, to lift up the voice in praise; but sadly do these boys abuse their gifts. Rarely have I found any of their age, on whom nature has so freely bestowed the elements of psalmody; and surely, surely, there are none who neglect them more. Three nights have I now tarried here, and three several times have I assembled the urchins to join in sacred song; and as often have they responded to my efforts with whoopings and howlings that have chilled my soul!"

"Of whom speak you?"

"Of those children of the devil, who waste the precious moments in yonder idle antics. Ah! the wholesome restraint of discipline is but little known among this self-abandoned people. In a country of birches, a rod is never seen; and it ought not to appear a marvel in my eyes, that the choicest blessings of Providence are wasted in such cries as these."

David closed his ears against the juvenile pack, whose yell just then rang shrilly through the forest; and Duncan, suffering his lip to curl, as in mockery of his own superstition, said firmly:

"We will proceed."

Without removing the safeguards from his ears, the master of song complied, and together they pursued their way towards what David was sometimes wont to call "the tents of the Philistines."



## CHAPTER 23

*"But though the beast of game  
The privilege of chase may claim;  
Though space and law the stag we lend  
Ere hound we slip, or bow we bend;  
Who ever recked, where, how, or when  
The prowling fox was trapped or slain?"*

—LADY OF THE LAKE.

It is unusual to find an encampment of the natives, like those of the more instructed whites, guarded by the presence of armed men. Well informed of the approach of every danger, while it is yet at a distance, the Indian generally rests secure under his knowledge of the signs of the forest, and the long and difficult paths that separate him from those he has most reason to dread. But the enemy who, by any lucky concurrence of accidents, has found means to elude the vigilance of the scouts, will seldom meet with sentinels nearer home to sound the alarm. In addition to this general usage, the tribes friendly to the French knew too well the weight of the blow that had just been struck, to apprehend any immediate danger from the hostile nations that were tributary to the crown of Britain.

When Duncan and David, therefore, found themselves in the centre of the children, who played the antics already mentioned, it was with the least previous intimation of their approach. But so soon as they were observed, the whole of the juvenile pack raised, by common consent, a shrill and warning whoop; and then sank, as it were, by magic, from before the sight of their visitors. The naked, tawny bodies of the crouching urchins blended so nicely, at that hour, with the withered herbage, that at first it seemed as if the earth had, in truth, swallowed up their forms; though when surprise permitted Duncan to bend his look more curiously about the spot, he found it everywhere met by dark, quick, and rolling eyeballs.

Gathering no encouragement from this startling presage of the nature of the scrutiny he was likely to undergo from the more mature judgments of the men, there was an instant when the young soldier would have retreated. It was, however, too late to appear to hesitate. The cry of the children had drawn a dozen warriors to the door of the nearest lodge, where they stood clustered in a dark and savage group, gravely awaiting the nearer approach of those who had unexpectedly come among them.

David, in some measure familiarized to the scene, led the way with a steadiness that no slight obstacle was likely to disconcert, into this very building. It was the principal edifice of the village, though roughly constructed of the bark and branches of trees; being the lodge in which the tribe held its councils and public meetings during their temporary residence on the borders of the English province. Duncan found it difficult to assume the necessary appearance of unconcern, as he brushed the dark and powerful frames of the savages who thronged its threshold; but, conscious that his existence depended on his presence of mind, he trusted to the discretion of his companion, whose footsteps he closely followed, endeavoring, as he proceeded, to rally his thoughts for the occasion. His blood curdled when he found himself in absolute contact with such fierce and implacable enemies; but he so far mastered his feelings as to pursue his way into the centre of the lodge, with an exterior that did not betray the weakness. Imitating the example of the deliberate Gamut, he drew a bundle of fragrant brush from beneath a pile that filled a corner of the hut, and seated himself in silence.

So soon as their visitor had passed, the observant warriors fell back from the entrance, and arranging themselves about him, they seemed patiently to await the moment when it might comport with the dignity of the stranger to speak. By far the greater number stood leaning, in lazy, lounging attitudes, against the upright posts that supported the crazy building, while three or four of the oldest and most distinguished of the chiefs placed themselves on the earth a little more in advance.

A flaring torch was burning in the place, and sent its red glare from face to face and figure to figure, as it waved in the currents of air. Duncan profited by its light to read the probable character of his reception, in the countenances of his hosts. But his ingenuity availed him little, against the cold artifices of the people he had encountered. The chiefs in front scarce cast a glance at his person, keeping their eyes on the ground, with an air that might have been intended for respect, but which it was quite easy to construe into distrust. The men in shadow were less reserved. Duncan soon detected their searching, but stolen looks, which, in truth, scanned his person and attire inch by inch; leaving no emotion of the countenance, no gesture, no line of the paint, nor even the fashion of a garment, unheeded, and without comment.

At length one whose hair was beginning to be sprinkled with gray, but whose sinewy limbs and firm tread announced that he was still equal to the duties of manhood, advanced out of the gloom of a corner, whither he had probably posted himself to make his observations unseen, and spoke. He used the language of the Wyandots, or Hurons; his words were, consequently, unintelligible to Heyward, though they seemed, by the gestures that accompanied them, to be uttered more in courtesy than anger. The latter shook his head, and made a gesture indicative of his inability to reply.

"Do none of my brothers speak the French or the English?" he said, in the former language, looking about him from countenance to countenance, in hopes of finding a nod of assent.

Though more than one had turned, as if to catch the meaning of his words, they remained unanswered.

"I should be grieved to think," continued Duncan, speaking slowly, and using the simplest French of which he was the master, "to believe, that none of this wise and brave nation understand the language that the 'Grand Monarque' uses when he talks to his children. His heart would be heavy did he believe his red warriors paid him so little respect!"

A long and grave pause succeeded, during which no movement of a limb, nor any expression of an eye, betrayed the impression produced by his remark. Duncan, who knew that silence was a virtue among his hosts, gladly had recourse to the custom, in order to arrange his ideas. At length the same warrior who had before addressed him replied, by dryly demanding, in the language of the Canadas —

"When our Great Father speaks to his people, is it with the tongue of a Huron?"

"He knows no difference in his children, whether the color of the skin be red, or black, or white," returned Duncan, evasively; "though chiefly is he satisfied with the brave Hurons."

"In what manner will he speak," demanded the wary chief, "when the runners count to him the scalps which five nights ago grew on the heads of the Yengeese?"

"They were his enemies," said Duncan, shuddering involuntarily; "and, doubtless, he will say, It is good; my Hurons are very gallant."

"Our Canada father does not think it. Instead of looking forward to reward his Indians, his eyes are turned backward. He sees the dead Yengeese, but no Huron. What can this mean?"

"A great chief, like him, has more thoughts than tongues. He looks to see that no enemies are on his trail."

"The canoe of a dead warrior will not float on the Horican," returned the savage, gloomily. "His ears are open to the Delawares, who are not our friends, and they fill them with lies."

"It cannot be. See; he has bid me, who am a man that knows the art of healing, to go to his children, the red Hurons of the great lakes, and ask if any are sick!"

Another silence succeeded this annunciation of the character Duncan had assumed. Every eye was simultaneously bent on his person, as if to inquire into the truth or falsehood of the declaration, with an intelligence and keenness that caused the subject of their scrutiny to tremble for the result. He was, however, relieved again by the former speaker.

"Do the cunning men of the Canadas paint their skins?" the Huron coldly continued; "we have heard them boast that their faces were pale."

"When an Indian chief comes among his white fathers," returned Duncan, with great steadiness, "he lays aside his buffalo robe, to carry the shirt that is offered him. My brothers have given me paint, and I wear it."

A low murmur of applause announced that the compliment to the tribe was favorably received. The elderly chief made a gesture of commendation, which was answered by most of his companions, who each threw forth a hand, and uttered a brief exclamation of pleasure. Duncan began to breathe more freely, believing that the weight of his examination was past; and as he had already prepared a simple and probable tale to support his pretended occupation, his hopes of ultimate success grew brighter.

After a silence of a few moments, as if adjusting his thoughts, in order to make a suitable answer to the declaration their guest had just given, another warrior arose, and placed himself in an attitude to speak. While his lips were yet in the act of parting, a low but fearful sound arose from the forest, and was immediately succeeded by a high, shrill yell, that was drawn out, until it equalled the longest and most plaintive howl of the wolf. The sudden and terrible interruption caused Duncan to start from his seat, unconscious of everything but the effect produced by so frightful a cry. At the same moment, the warriors glided in a body from the lodge, and the outer air was filled with loud shouts, that nearly drowned those awful

sounds, which were still ringing beneath the arches of the woods. Unable to command himself any longer, the youth broke from the place, and presently stood in the centre of a disorderly throng, that included nearly everything having life, within the limits of the encampment. Men, women, and children; the aged, the infirm, the active, and the strong, were alike abroad; some exclaiming aloud, others clapping their hands with a joy that seemed frantic, and all expressing their savage pleasure in some unexpected event. Though astounded, at first, by the uproar, Heyward was soon enabled to find its solution by the scene that followed.

There yet lingered sufficient light in the heavens to exhibit those bright openings among the tree-tops, where different paths left the clearing to enter the depths of the wilderness. Beneath one of them, a line of warriors issued from the woods, and advanced slowly towards the dwellings. One in front bore a short pole, on which, as it afterwards appeared, were suspended several human scalps. The startling sounds that Duncan had heard were what the whites have not inappropriately called the "death-halloo;" and each repetition of the cry was intended to announce to the tribe the fate of an enemy. Thus far the knowledge of Heyward assisted him in the explanation; and as he now knew that the interruption was caused by the unlooked-for return of a successful war-party, every disagreeable sensation was quieted in inward congratulation, for the opportune relief and insignificance it conferred on himself.

When at the distance of a few hundred feet from the lodges, the newly arrived warriors halted. Their plaintive and terrific cry, which was intended to represent equally the wailings of the dead and the triumph of the victors, had entirely ceased. One of their number now called aloud, in words that were far from appalling, though not more intelligible to those for whose ears they were intended, than their expressive yells. It would be difficult to convey a suitable idea of the savage ecstasy with which the news thus imparted was received. The whole encampment, in a moment, became a scene of the most violent bustle and commotion. The warriors drew their knives, and flourishing them, they arranged themselves in two lines, forming a lane that extended from the war-party to the lodges. The squaws seized clubs, axes, or whatever weapon of offence first offered itself to their hands, and rushed eagerly to act their part in the cruel game that was at hand. Even the children would not be excluded; but boys, little able to wield the instruments, tore the tomahawks from the belts of their fathers, and stole into the ranks, apt imitators of the savage traits exhibited by their parents.

Large piles of brush lay scattered about the clearing, and a wary and aged squaw was occupied in firing as many as might serve to light the coming exhibition. As the flame arose, its power exceeded that of the parting day, and assisted to render objects at the same time more distinct and more hideous. The whole scene formed a striking picture, whose frame was composed of the dark and tall border of pines. The warriors just arrived were the most distant figures. A little in advance stood two men, who were apparently selected from the rest, as the principal actors in what was to follow. The light was not strong enough to render their features distinct, though it was quite evident that they were governed by very different emotions. While one stood erect and firm, prepared to meet his fate like a hero, the other bowed his head, as if palsied by terror or stricken with shame. The high-spirited Duncan felt a powerful impulse of admiration and pity towards the former, though no opportunity could offer to exhibit his generous emotions. He watched his slightest movement, however, with eager eyes; and as he traced the fine outline of his admirably proportioned and active frame, he endeavored to persuade himself, that if the powers of man, seconded by such noble resolution, could bear one harmless through so severe a trial, the youthful captive before him might hope for success in the hazardous race he was about to run. Insensibly the young man drew nigher to the swarthy lines of the Hurons, and scarcely breathed, so intense became his interest in the spectacle. Just then the signal yell was given, and the momentary quiet which had preceded it was broken by a burst of cries, that far exceeded any before heard. The most abject of the two victims continued motionless; but the other bounded from the place at the cry, with the activity and swiftness of a deer. Instead of rushing through the hostile lines, as had been expected, he just entered the dangerous defile, and before time was given for a single blow, turned short, and leaping the heads of a row of children, he gained at once the exterior and safer side of the formidable array. The artifice was answered by a hundred voices raised in imprecations; and the whole of the excited multitude broke from their order, and spread themselves about the place in wild confusion.

A dozen blazing piles now shed their lurid brightness on the place, which resembled some unhallowed and supernatural arena, in which malicious demons had assembled to act their bloody and lawless rites. The forms in the background looked like unearthly beings, gliding before the eye, and cleaving the air with frantic and unmeaning gestures; while the savage passions of such as passed the flames, were rendered fearfully distinct by the gleams that shot athwart their inflamed visages.

It will easily be understood, that amid such a concourse of vindictive enemies, no breathing time was allowed the fugitive. There was a single moment when it seemed as if he would have reached the forest, but the whole body of his captors threw themselves before him, and drove him back into the centre of his relentless persecutors. Turning like a headed deer, he shot, with the swiftness of an arrow, through a pillar of forked flame, and passing the whole multitude harmless, he appeared on the opposite side of the clearing. Here too he was met and turned by a few of the older and more subtle of the Hurons. Once more he tried the throng, as if seeking safety in its blindness, and then several moments succeeded, during which Duncan believed the active and courageous young stranger was lost.

Nothing could be distinguished but a dark mass of human forms tossed and involved in inexplicable confusion. Arms, gleaming knives, and formidable clubs, appeared above them, but the blows were evidently given at random. The awful effect was heightened by the piercing shrieks of the women and the fierce yells of the warriors. Now and then Duncan caught a glimpse of a light form cleaving the air in some desperate bound, and he rather hoped than believed that the captive yet retained the command of his astonishing powers of activity. Suddenly the multitude rolled backward, and approached the spot where he himself stood. The heavy body in the rear pressed upon the women and children in front, and bore them to the earth. The stranger reappeared in the confusion. Human power could not, however, much longer endure so severe a trial. Of this the captive seemed conscious. Profiting by the momentary opening, he darted from among the warriors, and made a desperate, and, what seemed to Duncan, a final effort to gain the wood. As if aware that no danger was to be apprehended from the young soldier, the fugitive nearly brushed his person in his flight. A tall and powerful Huron, who had husbanded his forces, pressed close upon his heels, and with an uplifted arm menaced a fatal blow. Duncan thrust forth a foot, and the shock precipitated the eager savage headlong, many feet in advance of his intended victim. Thought itself is not quicker than was the motion with which the latter profited by the advantage; he turned, gleamed like a meteor again before the eyes of Duncan, and at the next moment, when the latter recovered his recollection, and gazed around in quest of the captive, he saw him quietly leaning against a small painted post, which stood before the door of the principal lodge.

Apprehensive that the part he had taken in the escape might prove fatal to himself, Duncan left the place without delay. He followed the crowd, which drew nigh the lodges, gloomy and sullen, like any other multitude that had been disappointed in an execution. Curiosity, or perhaps a better feeling, induced him to approach the stranger. He found him, standing with one arm cast about the protecting post, and breathing thick and hard, after his exertions, but disdaining to permit a single sign of suffering to escape. His person was now protected by immemorial and sacred usage, until the tribe in council had deliberated and determined on his fate. It was not difficult, however, to foretell the result, if any presage could be drawn from the feelings of those who crowded the place.

There was no term of abuse known to the Huron vocabulary that the disappointed women did not lavishly expend on the successful stranger. They flouted at his efforts, and told him, with bitter scoffs, that his feet were better than his hands; and that he merited wings, while he knew not the use of an arrow or a knife. To all this the captive made no reply; but was content to preserve an attitude in which dignity was singularly blended with disdain. Exasperated as much by his composure as by his good-fortune, their words became unintelligible, and were succeeded by shrill, piercing yells. Just then the crafty squaw, who had taken the necessary precaution to fire the piles, made her way through the throng, and cleared a place for herself in front of the captive. The squalid and withered person of this hag might well have obtained for her the character of possessing more than human cunning. Throwing back her light vestment, she stretched forth her long skinny arm, in derision, and using the language of the Lenape, as more intelligible to the subject of her gibes, she commenced aloud —

“Look you, Delaware!” she said, snapping her fingers in his face; “your nation is a race of women, and the hoe is better fitted to your hands than the gun. Your squaws are the mothers of deer; but if a bear, or a wild cat, or a serpent were born among you, ye would flee. The Huron girls shall make you petticoats, and we will find you a husband.”

A burst of savage laughter succeeded this attack, during which the soft and musical merriment of the younger females strangely chimed with the cracked voice of their older and more malignant companion. But the stranger was superior to all their efforts. His head was immovable; nor did he betray the slightest consciousness that any were present, except when his haughty eye rolled towards the dusky forms of the warriors, who stalked in the background, silent and sullen observers of the scene.

Infuriated at the self-command of the captive, the woman placed her arms akimbo; and throwing herself into a

posture of defiance, she broke out anew, in a torrent of words that no art of ours could commit successfully to paper. Her breath was, however, expended in vain; for, although distinguished in her own nation as a proficient in the art of abuse, she was permitted to work herself into such a fury as actually to foam at the mouth, without causing a muscle to vibrate in the motionless figure of the stranger. The effect of his indifference began to extend itself to the other spectators; and a youngster, who was just quitting the condition of a boy, to enter the state of manhood, attempted to assist the termagant, by flourishing his tomahawk before their victim, and adding his empty boasts to the taunts of the woman. Then, indeed, the captive turned his face towards the light, and looked down on the stripling with an expression that was superior to contempt. At the next moment he resumed his quiet and reclining attitude against the post. But the change of posture had permitted Duncan to exchange glances with the firm and piercing eyes of Uncas.

Breathless with amazement, and heavily oppressed with the critical situation of his friend, Heyward recoiled before the look, trembling lest its meaning might, in some unknown manner, hasten the prisoner's fate. There was not, however, any instant cause for such an apprehension. Just then a warrior forced his way into the exasperated crowd. Motioning the

women and children aside with a stern gesture, he took Uncas by the arm, and led him towards the door of the council lodge. Thither all the chiefs, and most of the distinguished warriors, followed; among whom the anxious Heyward found means to enter without attracting any dangerous attention to himself.

A few minutes were consumed in disposing of those present in a manner suitable to their rank and influence in the tribe. An order very similar to that adopted in the preceding interview was observed; the aged and superior chiefs occupying the area of the spacious apartment, within the powerful light of a glaring torch, while their juniors and inferiors were arranged in the background, presenting a dark outline of swarthy and marked visages. In the very centre of the lodge, immediately under an opening that admitted the twinkling light of one or two stars, stood Uncas, calm, elevated, and collected. His high and haughty carriage was not lost on his captors, who often bent their looks on his person, with eyes which, while they lost none of their inflexibility of purpose, plainly betrayed their admiration of the stranger's daring.

The case was different with the individual whom Duncan had observed to stand forth with his friend, previously to the desperate trial of speed; and who, instead of joining in the chase, had remained, throughout its turbulent uproar, like a cringing statue, expressive of shame and disgrace. Though not a hand had been extended to greet him, nor yet an eye had condescended to watch his movements, he had also entered the lodge, as though impelled by a fate to whose decrees he submitted, seemingly, without a struggle. Heyward profited by the first opportunity to gaze in his face, secretly apprehensive he might find the features of another acquaintance; but they proved to be those of a stranger, and, what was still more inexplicable, of one who bore all the distinctive marks of a Huron warrior. Instead of mingling with his tribe, however, he sat apart, a solitary being in a multitude, his form shrinking into a crouching and abject attitude, as if anxious to fill as little space as possible. When each individual had taken his proper station, and silence reigned in the place, the gray-haired chief already introduced to the reader, spoke aloud, in the language of the Lenni Lenape.

"Delaware," he said, "though one of a nation of women, you have proved yourself a man. I would give you food; but he who eats with a Huron should become his friend. Rest in peace till the morning sun, when our last words shall be spoken."

"Seven nights, and as many summer days, have I fasted on the trail of the Hurons," Uncas coldly replied; "the children of the Lenape know how to travel the path of the just without lingering to eat."

"Two of my young men are in pursuit of your companion," resumed the other, without appearing to regard the boast of his captive; "when they get back, then will our wise men say to you 'live' or 'die.'"

"Has a Huron no ears?" scornfully exclaimed Uncas; "twice, since he has been your prisoner, has the Delaware heard a gun that he knows. Your young men will never come back!"

A short and sullen pause succeeded this bold assertion. Duncan, who understood the Mohican to allude to the fatal rifle of the scout, bent forward in earnest observation of the effect it might produce on the conquerors; but the chief was content with simply retorting —

"If the Lenape are so skilful, why is one of their bravest warriors here?"

"He followed in the steps of a flying coward, and fell into a snare. The cunning beaver may be caught."

As Uncas thus replied, he pointed with his finger toward the solitary Huron, but without deigning to bestow any other notice on so unworthy an object. The words of the answer and the air of the speaker produced a strong sensation among his auditors. Every eye rolled sullenly towards the individual indicated by the simple gesture, and a low, threatening murmur passed through the crowd. The ominous sounds reached the outer door, and the women and children pressing into the throng, no gap had been left, between shoulder and shoulder, that was not now filled with the dark lineaments of some eager and curious human countenance.

In the meantime, the more aged chiefs, in the centre, communed with each other in short and broken sentences. Not a word was uttered that did not convey the meaning of the speaker, in the simplest and most energetic form. Again, a long and deeply solemn pause took place. It was known, by all present, to be the grave precursor of a weighty and important judgment. They who composed the outer circle of faces were on tiptoe to gaze; and even the culprit for an instant forgot his shame in a deeper emotion, and exposed his abject features, in order to cast an anxious and troubled glance at the dark assemblage of chiefs. The silence was finally broken by the aged warrior so often named. He arose from the earth, and moving past the immovable form of Uncas, placed himself in a dignified attitude before the offender. At that moment, the withered squaw already mentioned moved into the circle, in a slow, sideling sort of a dance, holding the torch, and muttering the indistinct words of what might have been a species of incantation. Though her presence was altogether an



intrusion, it was unheeded.

Approaching Uncas, she held the blazing brand in such a manner as to cast its red glare on his person, and to expose the slightest emotion of his countenance. The Mohican maintained his firm and haughty attitude; and his eye, so far from deigning to meet her inquisitive look, dwelt steadily on the distance, as though it penetrated the obstacles which impeded the view, and looked into futurity. Satisfied with her examination, she left him, with a slight expression of pleasure, and proceeded to practise the same trying experiment on her delinquent countryman.

The young Huron was in his war paint, and very little of a finely moulded form was concealed by his attire. The light rendered every limb and joint discernible, and Duncan turned away in horror when he saw they were writhing in irrepressible agony. The woman was commencing a low and plaintive howl at the sad and shameful spectacle, when the chief put forth his hand and gently pushed her aside.

“Reed-that-bends,” he said, addressing the young culprit by name, and in his proper language, “though the Great Spirit has made you pleasant to the eyes, it would have been better that you had not been born. Your tongue is loud in the village, but in battle it is still. None of my young men strike the tomahawk deeper into the war-post — none of them so lightly on the Yengeese. The enemy know the shape of your back, but they have never seen the color of your eyes. Three times have they called on you to come, and as often did you forget to answer. Your name will never be mentioned again in your tribe — it is already forgotten.”

As the chief slowly uttered these words, pausing impressively between each sentence, the culprit raised his face, in deference to the other’s rank and years. Shame, horror, and pride struggled in its lineaments. His eye, which was contracted with inward anguish, gleamed on the persons of those whose breath was his fame; and the latter emotion for an instant predominated. He arose to his feet, and baring his bosom, looked steadily on the keen, glittering knife, that was already upheld by his inexorable judge. As the weapon passed slowly into his heart he even smiled, as if in joy at having found death less dreadful than he had anticipated, and fell heavily on his face, at the feet of the rigid and unyielding form of Uncas.

The squaw gave a loud and plaintive yell, dashed the torch to the earth, and buried everything in darkness. The whole shuddering group of spectators glided from the lodge, like troubled sprites; and Duncan thought that he and the yet throbbing body of the victim of an Indian judgment had now become its only tenants.



## CHAPTER 24

*"Thus spoke the sage: the kings without delay  
Dissolve the council, and their chief obey."*

—POPE'S ILLIAD.

A single moment served to convince the youth that he was mistaken. A hand was laid, with a powerful pressure, on his arm, and the low voice of Uncas muttered in his ears —

"The Hurons are dogs. The sight of a coward's blood can never make a warrior tremble. The 'Gray Head' and the Sagamore are safe, and the rifle of Hawkeye is not asleep. Go — Uncas and the 'Open Hand' are now strangers. It is enough."

Heyward would gladly have heard more, but a gentle push from his friend urged him towards the door, and admonished him of the danger that might attend the discovery of their intercourse. Slowly and reluctantly yielding to the necessity, he quitted the place, and mingled with the throng that hovered nigh. The dying fires in the clearing cast a dim and uncertain light on the dusky figures that were silently stalking to and fro; and occasionally a brighter gleam than common glanced into the lodge, and exhibited the figure of Uncas still maintaining its upright attitude near the dead body of the Huron.

A knot of warriors soon entered the place again, and reissuing, they bore the senseless remains into the adjacent woods. After this termination of the scene, Duncan wandered among the lodges, unquestioned and unnoticed, endeavoring to find some trace of her in whose behalf he incurred the risk he ran. In the present temper of the tribe, it would have been easy to have fled and rejoined his companions, had such a wish crossed his mind. But, in addition to the never-ceasing anxiety on account of Alice, a fresher, though feeblener interest in the fate of Uncas assisted to chain him to the spot. He continued, therefore, to stray from hut to hut, looking into each only to encounter additional disappointment, until he had made the entire circuit of the village. Abandoning a species of inquiry that proved so fruitless, he retraced his steps to the council lodge, resolved to seek and question David, in order to put an end to his doubts.

On reaching the building which had proved alike the seat of judgment and the place of execution, the young man found that the excitement had already subsided. The warriors had reassembled, and were now calmly smoking, while they conversed gravely on the chief incidents of their recent expedition to the head of the Horican. Though the return of Duncan was likely to remind them of his character, and the suspicious circumstances of his visit, it produced no visible sensation. So far, the terrible scene that had just occurred proved favorable to his views, and he required no other prompter than his own feelings to convince him of the expediency of profiting by so unexpected an advantage.

Without seeming to hesitate, he walked into the lodge, and took his seat with a gravity that accorded admirably with the deportment of his hosts. A hasty but searching glance sufficed to tell him that, though Uncas still remained where he had left him, David had not reappeared. No other restraint was imposed on the former than the watchful looks of a young Huron, who had placed himself at hand; though an armed warrior leaned against the post that formed one side of the narrow door-way. In every other respect, the captive seemed at liberty; still he was excluded from all participation in the discourse, and possessed much more of the air of some finely moulded statue than a man having life and volition.

Heyward had too recently witnessed a frightful instance of the prompt punishments of the people into whose hands he had fallen, to hazard an exposure by any officious boldness. He would greatly have preferred silence and meditation to speech, when a discovery of his real condition might prove so instantly fatal. Unfortunately for this prudent resolution, his entertainers appeared otherwise disposed. He had not long occupied the seat wisely taken a little in the shade, when another of the elder warriors, who spoke the French language, addressed him:—

"My Canada father does not forget his children," said the chief; "I thank him. An evil spirit lives in the wife of one of my young men. Can the cunning stranger frighten him away?"

Heyward possessed some knowledge of the mummery practised among the Indians, in the cases of such supposed visitations. He saw, at a glance, that the circumstance might possibly be improved to further his own end. It would, therefore, have been difficult, just then, to have uttered a proposal that would have given him more satisfaction. Aware of the necessity of preserving the dignity of his imaginary character, however, he repressed his feelings, and answered with

suitable mystery —

“Spirits differ; some yield to the power of wisdom, while others are too strong.”

“My brother is a great medicine,” said the cunning savage; “he will try?”

A gesture of assent was the answer. The Huron was content with the assurance, and resuming his pipe, he awaited the proper moment to move. The impatient Heyward, inwardly execrating the cold customs of the savages, which required such sacrifices to appearance, was fain to assume an air of indifference, equal to that maintained by the chief, who was, in truth, a near relative of the afflicted woman. The minutes lingered, and the delay had seemed an hour to the adventurer in empiricism, when the Huron laid aside his pipe, and drew his robe across his breast, as if about to lead the way to the lodge of the invalid. Just then, a warrior of powerful frame darkened the door, and stalking silently among the attentive group, he seated himself on one end of the low pile of brush which sustained Duncan. The latter cast an impatient look at his neighbor, and felt his flesh creep with uncontrollable horror when he found himself in actual contact with Magua.

The sudden return of this artful and dreaded chief caused a delay in the departure of the Huron. Several pipes, that had been extinguished, were lighted again; while the newcomer, without speaking a word, drew his tomahawk from his girdle, and filling the bowl on its head, began to inhale the vapors of the weed through the hollow handle, with as much indifference as if he had not been absent two weary days on a long and toilsome hunt. Ten minutes, which appeared so many ages to Duncan, might have passed in this manner; and the warriors were fairly enveloped in a cloud of white smoke before any of them spoke.

“Welcome!” one at length uttered; “has my friend found the moose?”

“The young men stagger under their burdens,” returned Magua. “Let ‘Reed-that-bends’ go on the hunting-path; he will meet them.”

A deep and awful silence succeeded the utterance of the forbidden name. Each pipe dropped from the lips of its owner as though all had inhaled an impurity at the same instant. The smoke wreathed above their heads in little eddies, and curling in a spiral form, it ascended swiftly through the opening in the roof of the lodge, leaving the place beneath clear of its fumes, and each dark visage distinctly visible. The looks of most of the warriors were riveted on the earth; though a few of the younger and less gifted of the party suffered their wild and glaring eyeballs to roll in the direction of a white-headed savage, who sat between two of the most venerated chiefs of the tribe. There was nothing in the air or attire of this Indian that would seem to entitle him to such a distinction. The former was rather depressed, than remarkable for the bearing of the natives; and the latter was such as was commonly worn by the ordinary men of the nation. Like most around him, for more than a minute his look too was on the ground; but, trusting his eyes at length to steal a glance aside, he perceived that he was becoming an object of general attention. Then he arose and lifted his voice in the general silence.

“It was a lie,” he said; “I had no son. He who was called by that name is forgotten; his blood was pale; and it came not from the veins of a Huron; the wicked Chippewas cheated my squaw. The Great Spirit has said, that the family of Wiss-entush should end; he is happy who knows that the evil of his race dies with himself. I have done.”

The speaker, who was the father of the recreant young Indian, looked round and about him, as if seeking commendation of his stoicism in the eyes of his auditors. But the stern customs of his people had made too severe an exaction of the feeble old man. The expression of his eye contradicted his figurative and boastful language, while every muscle in his wrinkled visage was working with anguish. Standing a single minute to enjoy his bitter triumph, he turned away, as if sickening at the gaze of men, and veiling his face in his blanket, he walked from the lodge with the noiseless step of an Indian, seeking, in the privacy of his own abode, the sympathy of one like himself, aged, forlorn, and childless.

The Indians, who believe in the hereditary transmission of virtues and defects in character, suffered him to depart in silence. Then, with an elevation of breeding that many in a more cultivated state of society might profitably emulate, one of the chiefs drew the attention of the young men from the weakness they had just witnessed, by saying, in a cheerful voice, addressing himself in courtesy to Magua, as the newest comer —

“The Delawares have been like bears after the honey-pots, prowling around my village. But who has ever found a Huron asleep?”

The darkness of the impending cloud which precedes a burst of thunder was not blacker than the brow of Magua as he exclaimed —

“The Delawares of the Lakes!”

“Not so. They who wear the petticoats of squaws, on their own river. One of them has been passing the tribe.”

“Did my young men take his scalp?”

“His legs were good, though his arm is better for the hoe than the tomahawk,” returned the other, pointing to the immovable form of Uncas.

Instead of manifesting any womanish curiosity to feast his eyes with the sight of a captive from a people he was known to have so much reason to hate, Magua continued to smoke, with the meditative air that he usually maintained, when there was no immediate call on his cunning or his eloquence. Although secretly amazed at the facts communicated by the speech of the aged father, he permitted himself to ask no questions, reserving his inquiries for a more suitable moment. It was only after a sufficient interval that he shook the ashes from his pipe, replaced the tomahawk, tightened his girdle, and arose, casting for the first time a glance in the direction of the prisoner, who stood a little behind him. The wary, though seemingly abstracted Uncas, caught a glimpse of the movement, and turning suddenly to the light, their looks met. Near a minute these two bold and untamed spirits stood regarding one another steadily in the eye, neither quailing in the least before the fierce gaze he encountered. The form of Uncas dilated, and his nostrils opened like those of a tiger at bay; but so rigid and unyielding was his posture, that he might easily have been converted by the imagination into an exquisite and faultless representation of the warlike deity of his tribe. The lineaments of the quivering features of Magua proved more ductile; his countenance gradually lost its character of defiance in an expression of ferocious joy, and heaving a breath from the very bottom of his chest, he pronounced aloud the very formidable name of —

“Le Cerf Agile!”

Each warrior sprang upon his feet at the utterance of the well known appellation, and there was a short period during which the stoical constancy of the natives was completely conquered by surprise. The hated and yet respected name was repeated as by one voice, carrying the sound even beyond the limits of the lodge. The women and children, who lingered around the entrance, took up the words in an echo, which was succeeded by another shrill and plaintive howl. The latter was not yet ended, when the sensation among the men had entirely abated. Each one in presence seated himself, as though ashamed of his precipitation; but it was many minutes before their meaning eyes ceased to roll towards their captive, in curious examination of a warrior who had so often proved his prowess on the best and proudest of their nation. Uncas enjoyed his victory, but was content with merely exhibiting his triumph by a quiet smile — an emblem of scorn which belongs to all time and every nation.

Magua caught the expression, and raising his arm, he shook it at the captive, the light silver ornaments attached to his bracelet rattling with the trembling agitation of the limb, as, in a tone of vengeance, he exclaimed, in English —

“Mohican, you die!”

“The healing waters will never bring the dead Hurons to life,” returned Uncas, in the music of the Delawares; “the tumbling river washes their bones; their men are squaws; their women owls. Go! call together the Huron dogs, that they may look upon a warrior. My nostrils are offended; they scent the blood of a coward.”

The latter allusion struck deep, and the injury rankled. Many of the Hurons understood the strange tongue in which the captive spoke, among which number was Magua. This cunning savage beheld, and instantly profited by his advantage. Dropping the light robe of skin from his shoulder, he stretched forth his arm, and commenced a burst of his dangerous and artful eloquence. However much his influence among his people had been impaired by his occasional and besetting weakness, as well as by his desertion of the tribe, his courage and his fame as an orator were undeniable. He never spoke without auditors, and rarely without making converts to his opinions. On the present occasion, his native powers were stimulated by the thirst of revenge.

He again recounted the events of the attack on the island at Glenn’s, the death of his associates, and the escape of their most formidable enemies. Then he described the nature and position of the mount whither he had led such captives as had fallen into their hands. Of his own bloody intentions towards the maidens, and of his baffled malice he made no mention, but passed rapidly on to the surprise of the party by La Longue Carabine, and its fatal termination. Here he paused, and looked about him, in affected veneration for the departed, but, in truth, to note the effect of his opening narrative. As usual, every eye was riveted on his face. Each dusky figure seemed a breathing statue, so motionless was the posture, so intense the attention of the individual.

Then Magua dropped his voice, which had hitherto been clear, strong, and elevated, and touched upon the merits of

the dead. No quality that was likely to command the sympathy of an Indian escaped his notice. One had never been known to follow the chase in vain; another had been indefatigable on the trail of their enemies. This was brave, that generous. In short, he so managed his allusions, that in a nation, which was composed of so few families, he contrived to strike every chord that might find, in its turn, some breast in which to vibrate.

“Are the bones of my young men,” he concluded, “in the burial-place of the Hurons? You know they are not. Their spirits are gone towards the setting sun, and are already crossing the great waters, to the happy hunting-grounds. But they departed without food, without guns or knives, without moccasins, naked and poor as they were born. Shall this be? Are their souls to enter the land of the just like hungry Iroquois or unmanly Delawares; or shall they meet their friends with arms in their hands and robes on their backs? What will our fathers think the tribes of the Wyandots have become? They will look on their children with a dark eye, and say, Go! a Chippewa has come hither with the name of a Huron. Brothers, we must not forget the dead; a redskin never ceases to remember. We will load the back of this Mohican until he staggers under our bounty, and despatch him after my young men. They call to us for aid, though our ears are not open; they say, Forget us not. When they see the spirit of this Mohican toiling after them with his burden, they will know we are of that mind. Then will they go on happy; and our children will say, ‘So did our fathers to their friends, so must we do to them.’ What is a Yengee? we have slain many, but the earth is still pale. A stain on the name of a Huron can only be hid by blood that comes from the veins of an Indian. Let this Delaware die.”

The effect of such an harangue, delivered in the nervous language and with the emphatic manner of a Huron orator, could scarcely be mistaken. Magua had so artfully blended the natural sympathies with the religious superstition of his auditors, that their minds, already prepared by custom to sacrifice a victim to the *manes* of their countrymen, lost every vestige of humanity in a wish for revenge. One warrior in particular, a man of wild and ferocious mien, had been conspicuous for the attention he had given to the words of the speaker. His countenance had changed with each passing emotion, until it settled into a look of deadly malice. As Magua ended he arose, and uttering the yell of a demon, his polished little axe was seen glancing in the torch-light as he whirled it above his head. The motion and the cry were too sudden for words to interrupt his bloody intention. It appeared as if a bright gleam shot from his hand, which was crossed at the same moment by a dark and powerful line. The former was the tomahawk in its passage; the latter the arm that Magua darted forward to divert its aim. The quick and ready motion of the chief was not entirely too late. The keen weapon cut the war-plume from the scalping-tuft of Uncas, and passed through the frail wall of the lodge, as though it were hurled from some formidable engine.

Duncan had seen the threatening action, and sprang upon his feet, with a heart which while it leaped into his throat, swelled with the most generous resolution in behalf of his friend. A glance told him that the blow had failed, and terror changed to admiration. Uncas stood still, looking his enemy in the eye with features that seemed superior to emotion. Marble could not be colder, calmer, or steadier than the countenance he put upon this sudden and vindictive attack. Then, as if pitying a want of skill which had proved so fortunate to himself, he smiled, and muttered a few words of contempt in his own tongue.

“No!” said Magua, after satisfying himself of the safety of the captive; “the sun must shine on his shame; the squaws must see his flesh tremble, or our revenge will be like the play of boys. Go! take him where there is silence; let us see if a Delaware can sleep at night, and in the morning die.”

The young men whose duty it was to guard the prisoner instantly passed their ligaments of bark across his arms, and led him from the lodge, amid a profound and ominous silence. It was only as the figure of Uncas stood in the opening of the door that his firm step hesitated. There he turned, and, in the sweeping and haughty glance that he threw around the circle of his enemies, Duncan caught a look which he was glad to construe into an expression that he was not entirely deserted by hope.

Magua was content with his success, or too much occupied with his secret purposes to push his inquiries any further. Shaking his mantle, and folding it on his bosom, he also quitted the place, without pursuing a subject which might have proved so fatal to the individual at his elbow. Notwithstanding his rising resentment, his natural firmness, and his anxiety in behalf of Uncas, Heyward felt sensibly relieved by the absence of so dangerous and so subtle a foe. The excitement produced by the speech gradually subsided. The warriors resumed their seats, and clouds of smoke once more filled the lodge. For near half an hour, not a syllable was uttered, or scarcely a look cast aside; a grave and meditative silence being the ordinary succession to every scene of violence and commotion among those beings, who were alike so impetuous and

yet so self-restrained.

When the chief who had solicited the aid of Duncan finished his pipe, he made a final and successful movement towards departing. A motion of a finger was the intimation he gave the supposed physician to follow; and passing through the clouds of smoke, Duncan was glad, on more accounts than one, to be able, at last, to breathe the pure air of a cool and refreshing summer evening.

Instead of pursuing his way among those lodges where Heyward had already made his unsuccessful search, his companion turned aside, and proceeded directly towards the base of an adjacent mountain, which overhung the temporary village. A thicket of brush skirted its foot, and it became necessary to proceed through a crooked and narrow path. The boys had resumed their sports in the clearing, and were enacting a mimic chase to the post among themselves. In order to render their games as like the reality as possible, one of the boldest of their number had conveyed a few brands into some piles of tree-tops that had hitherto escaped the burning. The blaze of one of these fires lighted the way of the chief and Duncan, and gave a character of additional wildness to the rude scenery. At a little distance from a bald rock, and directly in its front, they entered a grassy opening, which they prepared to cross. Just then fresh fuel was added to the fire, and a powerful light penetrated even to that distant spot. It fell upon the white surface of the mountain, and was reflected downwards upon a dark and mysterious-looking being that arose, unexpectedly, in their path.

The Indian paused, as if doubtful whether to proceed, and permitted his companion to approach his side. A large black ball, which at first seemed stationary, now began to move in a manner that to the latter was inexplicable. Again the fire brightened, and its glare fell more distinctly on the object. Then even Duncan knew it, by its restless and sideling attitudes, which kept the upper part of its form in constant motion, while the animal itself appeared seated, to be a bear. Though it growled loudly and fiercely, and there were instants when its glistening eyeballs might be seen, it gave no other indications of hostility. The Huron, at least, seemed assured that the intentions of this singular intruder were peaceable, for after giving it an attentive examination, he quietly pursued his course.

Duncan, who knew that the animal was often domesticated among the Indians, followed the example of his companion, believing that some favorite of the tribe had found its way into the thicket, in search of food. They passed it unmolested. Though obliged to come nearly in contact with the monster, the Huron, who had at first so warily determined the character of his strange visitor, was now content with proceeding without wasting a moment in further examination; but Heyward was unable to prevent his eyes from looking backward, in salutary watchfulness against attacks in the rear. His uneasiness was in no degree diminished when he perceived the beast rolling along their path, and following their footsteps. He would have spoken, but the Indian at that moment shoved aside a door of bark, and entered a cavern in the bosom of the mountain.

Profiting by so easy a method of retreat, Duncan stepped after him, and was gladly closing the slight cover to the opening, when he felt it drawn from his hand by the beast, whose shaggy form immediately darkened the passage. They were now in a straight and long gallery, in a chasm of the rocks, where retreat without encountering the animal was impossible. Making the best of the circumstances, the young man pressed forward, keeping as close as possible to his conductor. The bear growled frequently at his heels, and once or twice its enormous paws were laid on his person, as if disposed to prevent his further passage into the den.

How long the nerves of Heyward would have sustained him in this extraordinary situation, it might be difficult to decide; for, happily, he soon found relief. A glimmer of light had constantly been in their front, and they now arrived at the place whence it proceeded.

A large cavity in the rock had been rudely fitted to answer the purposes of many apartments. The subdivisions were simple but ingenious, being composed of stone, sticks, and bark, intermingled. Openings above admitted the light by day, and at night fires and torches supplied the place of the sun. Hither the Hurons had brought most of their valuables, especially those which more particularly pertained to the nation; and hither, as it now appeared, the sick woman, who was believed to be the victim of supernatural power, had been transported also, under an impression that her tormentor would find more difficulty in making his assaults through walls of stone than through the leafy coverings of the lodges. The apartment into which Duncan and his guide first entered, had been exclusively devoted to her accommodation. The latter approached her bedside, which was surrounded by females, in the centre of whom Heyward was surprised to find his missing friend David.

A single look was sufficient to apprise the pretended leech that the invalid was far beyond his powers of healing. She lay in a sort of paralysis, indifferent to the objects which crowded before her sight, and happily unconscious of suffering. Heyward was far from regretting that his mummeries were to be performed on one who was much too ill to take an interest in their failure or success. The slight qualm of conscience which had been excited by the intended deception was instantly appeased, and he began to collect his thoughts, in order to enact his part with suitable spirit, when he found he was about to be anticipated in his skill by an attempt to prove the power of music.

Gamut, who had stood prepared to pour forth his spirit in song when the visitors entered, after delaying a moment, drew a strain from his pipe, and commenced a hymn that might have worked a miracle, had faith in its efficacy been of much avail. He was allowed to proceed to the close, the Indians respecting his imaginary infirmity, and Duncan too glad of the delay to hazard the slightest interruption. As the dying cadence of his strains was falling on the ears of the latter, he started aside at hearing them repeated behind him in a voice half human, half sepulchral. Looking around, he beheld the shaggy monster seated on end in a shadow of the cavern, where, while his restless body swung in the uneasy manner of the animal, it repeated, in a sort of low growl, sound, if not words, which bore some slight resemblance to the melody of the singer.

The effect of so strange an echo on David may better be imagined than described. His eyes opened as if he doubted their truth; and his voice became instantly mute in excess of wonder. A deep-laid scheme, of communicating some important intelligence to Heyward, was driven from his recollection by an emotion which very nearly resembled fear, but which he was fain to believe was admiration. Under its influence, he exclaimed aloud —“She expects you, and is at hand;” and precipitately left the cavern.



## CHAPTER 25

*"SNUG.— Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study."*

*"QUINCE. — You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring."*

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

There was a strange blending of the ridiculous with that which was solemn in this scene. The beast still continued its rolling, and apparently untiring movements, though its ludicrous attempt to imitate the melody of David ceased the instant the latter abandoned the field. The words of Gamut were, as has been seen, in his native tongue; and to Duncan they seemed pregnant with some hidden meaning, though nothing present assisted him in discovering the object of their illusion. A speedy end was, however, put to every conjecture on the subject, by the manner of the chief, who advanced to the bedside of the invalid, and beckoned away the whole group of female attendants that had clustered there to witness the skill of the stranger. He was implicitly, though reluctantly, obeyed; and when the low echo which rang along the hollow natural gallery from the distant closing door had ceased, pointing towards his insensible daughter, he said —

"Now let my brother show his power."

Thus unequivocally called on to exercise the functions of his assumed character, Heyward was apprehensive that the smallest delay might prove dangerous. Endeavoring then to collect his ideas, he prepared to perform that species of incantation, and those uncouth rites, under which the Indian conjurers are accustomed to conceal their ignorance and impotency. It is more than probable that, in the disordered state of his thoughts, he would soon have fallen into some suspicious, if not fatal error, had not his incipient attempts been interrupted by a fierce growl from the quadruped. Three several times did he renew his efforts to proceed, and as often was he met by the same unaccountable opposition, each interruption seeming more savage and threatening than the preceding.

"The cunning ones are jealous," said the Huron; "I go. Brother, the woman is the wife of one of my bravest young men; deal justly by her. Peace!" he added, beckoning to the discontented beast to be quiet; "I go."

The chief was as good as his word, and Duncan now found himself alone in that wild and desolate abode, with the helpless invalid, and the fierce and dangerous brute. The latter listened to the movements of the Indian with that air of sagacity that a bear is known to possess, until another echo announced that he had also left the cavern, when it turned and came waddling up to Duncan, before whom it seated itself, in its natural attitude, erect like a man. The youth looked anxiously about him for some weapon, with which he might make a resistance against the attack he now seriously expected.

It seemed, however, as if the humor of the animal had suddenly changed. Instead of continuing its discontented growls, or manifesting any further signs of anger, the whole of its shaggy body shook violently, as if agitated by some strange internal convulsion. The huge and unwieldy talons pawed stupidly about the grinning muzzle, and while Heyward kept his eyes riveted on its movements with jealous watchfulness, the grim head fell on one side, and in its place appeared the honest, sturdy countenance of the scout, who was indulging from the bottom of his soul, in his own peculiar expression of merriment.

"Hist!" said the wary woodsman, interrupting Heyward's exclamation of surprise; "the varlets are about the place, and any sounds that are not natural to witchcraft would bring them back upon us in a body."

"Tell me the meaning of this masquerade; and why you have attempted so desperate an adventure."

"Ah! reason and calculation are often outdone by accident," returned the scout. "But as a story should always commence at the beginning, I will tell you the whole in order. After we parted I placed the commandant and the Sagamore in an old beaver lodge, where they are safer from the Hurons than they would be in the garrison of Edward, for your high northwest Indians, not having as yet got the traders among them, continue to venerate the beaver. After which Uncas and I pushed for the other encampment, as was agreed; have you seen the lad?"

"To my great grief! he is captive, and condemned to die at the rising of the sun."



"I had misgivings that such would be his fate," resumed the scout, in a less confident and joyous tone. But soon regaining his naturally firm voice, he continued: "His bad fortune is the true reason of my being here, for it would never do to abandon such a boy to the Hurons. A rare time the knaves would have of it, could they tie The Bounding Elk and The Long Carabine, as they call me, to the same stake! Though why they have given me such a name I never knew, there being as little likeness between the gifts of 'Killdeer,' and the performance of one of your real Canada carabynes, as there is between the natur' of a pipe-stone and a flint!"

"Keep to your tale," said the impatient Heyward; "we know not at what moment the Hurons may return."

"No fear of them. A conjurer must have his time, like a straggling priest in the settlements. We are as safe from interruption as a missionary would be at the beginning of a two hours' discourse. Well, Uncas and I fell in with a return party of the varlets; the lad was much too forward for a scout; nay, for that matter, being of hot blood, he was not so much to blame; and, after all, one of the Hurons proved a coward, and in fleeing led him into an ambushment."

"And dearly has he paid for the weakness!"

The scout significantly passed his hand across his own throat, and nodded, as if he said, "I comprehend your meaning." After which he continued, in a more audible though scarcely more intelligible language —

"After the loss of the boy I turned upon the Hurons, as you may judge. There have been scrimmages atween one or two of their outlyers and myself; but that is neither here nor there. So, after I had shot the imps, I got in pretty nigh to the lodges without further commotion. Then what should luck do in my favor, but lead me to the very spot where one of the most famous conjurers of the tribe was dressing himself, as I well knew, for some great battle with Satan — though why should I call that luck, which it now seems was an especial ordering of Providence! So a judgmatical rap over the head stiffened the lying impostor for a time, and leaving him a bit of walnut for his supper, to prevent an uproar, and stringing him up atween two sapplings, I made free with his finery, and took the part of the bear on myself, in order that the operations might proceed."

"And admirably did you enact the character; the animal itself might have been shamed by the representation."

"Lord, major," returned the flattered woodsman, "I should be but a poor scholar for one who has studied so long in the wilderness, did I not know how to set forth the movements and natur' of such a beast. Had it been now a catamount, or even a full-sized panther, I would have embellished a performance for you worth regarding. But it is no such marvellous feat to exhibit the feats of so dull a beast; though, for that matter too, a bear may be overacted. Yes, yes; it is not every imitator that knows natur' may be outdone easier than she is equalled. But all our work is yet before us: where is the gentle one?"

"Heaven knows; I have examined every lodge in the village, without discovering the slightest trace of her presence in the tribe."

"You heard what the singer said, as he left us — 'She is at hand, and expects you'?"

"I have been compelled to believe he alluded to this unhappy woman."

"The simpleton was frightened, and blundered through his message; but he had a deeper meaning. Here are walls enough to separate the whole settlement. A bear ought to climb; therefore will I take a look above them. There may be honey-pots hid in these rocks, and I am a beast you know, that has a hankering for the sweets."

The scout looked behind him, laughing at his own conceit, while he clambered up the partition, imitating, as he went, the clumsy motions of the beast he represented; but the instant the summit was gained he made a gesture for silence, and slid down with the utmost precipitation.

"She is here," he whispered, "and by that door you will find her. I would have spoken a word of comfort to the afflicted soul; but the sight of such a monster might upset her reason. Though for that matter, major, you are none of the most inviting yourself in your paint."

Duncan, who had already sprung eagerly forward, drew instantly back on hearing these discouraging words.

"Am I, then, so very revolting?" he demanded, with an air of chagrin.

"You might not startle a wolf, or turn the Royal Americans from a charge; but I have seen the time when you had a better-favored look; your streaked countenances are not ill-judged of by the squaws, but young women of white blood give the preference to their own color. See," he added, pointing to a place where the water trickled from a rock, forming a little crystal spring before it found an issue through the adjacent crevices; "you may easily get rid of the Sagamore's daub, and when you come back I will try my hand at a new embellishment. It's as common for a conjurer to alter his paint as for a buck in the settlements to change his finery."

The deliberate woodsman had little occasion to hunt for arguments to enforce his advice. He was yet speaking when Duncan availed himself of the water. In a moment every frightful or offensive mark was obliterated, and the youth appeared again in the lineaments with which he had been gifted by nature. Thus prepared for an interview with his mistress, he took a hasty leave of his companion, and disappeared through the indicated passage. The scout witnessed his departure with complacency, nodding his head after him, and muttering his good wishes; after which he very coolly set about an examination of the state of the larder, among the Hurons — the cavern, among other purposes, being used as a receptacle for the fruits of their hunts.

Duncan had no other guide than a distant glimmering light, which served, however, the office of a polar star to the lover. By its aid he was enabled to enter the haven of his hopes, which was merely another apartment of the cavern, that had been solely appropriated to the safe-keeping of so important a prisoner as a daughter of the commandant of William

Henry. It was profusely strewn with the plunder of that unlucky fortress. In the midst of this confusion he found her he sought, pale, anxious, and terrified, but lovely. David had prepared her for such a visit.

"Duncan!" she exclaimed, in a voice that seemed to tremble at the sounds created by itself.

"Alice" he answered, leaping carelessly among trunks, boxes, arms, and furniture, until he stood at her side.

"I knew that you would never desert me," she said, looking up with a momentary glow on her otherwise dejected countenance. "But you are alone! grateful as it is to be thus remembered, I could wish to think you are not entirely alone."

Duncan, observing that she trembled in a manner which betrayed her inability to stand, gently induced her to be seated, while he recounted those leading incidents which it has been our task to record. Alice listened with breathless interest; and though the young man touched lightly on the sorrows of the stricken father, taking care, however, not to wound the self-love of his auditor, the tears ran as freely down the cheeks of the daughter as though she had never wept before. The soothing tenderness of Duncan, however, soon quieted the first burst of her emotions, and she then heard him to the close with undivided attention, if not with composure.

"And now, Alice," he added, "you will see how much is still expected of you. By the assistance of our experienced and invaluable friend, the scout, we may find our way from this savage people, but you will have to exert your utmost fortitude. Remember that you fly to the arms of your venerable parent, and how much his happiness, as well as your own, depends on those exertions."

"Can I do otherwise for a father who has done so much for me?"

"And for me too," continued the youth, gently pressing the hand he held in both his own.

The look of innocence and surprise which he received in return convinced Duncan of the necessity of being more explicit.

"This is neither the place nor the occasion to detain you with selfish wishes," he added; "but what heart loaded like mine would not wish to cast its burden? They say misery is the closest of all ties; our common suffering in your behalf left but little to be explained between your father and myself."

"And dearest Cora, Duncan; surely Cora was not forgotten?"

"Not forgotten! no; regretted, as woman was seldom mourned before. Your venerable father knew no difference between his children; but I— Alice, you will not be offended when I say, that to me her worth was in a degree obscured —"

"Then you knew not the merit of my sister," said Alice, withdrawing her hand; "of you she ever speaks as of one who is her nearest friend."

"I would gladly believe her such," returned Duncan, hastily; "I could wish her to be even more; but with you, Alice, I have the permission of your father to aspire to a still nearer and dearer tie."

Alice trembled violently, and there was an instant during which she bent her face aside, yielding to the emotions common to her sex; but they quickly passed away, leaving her mistress of her deportment, if not of her affections.

"Heyward," she said, looking him full in the face with a touching expression of innocence and dependency, "give me the sacred presence and the holy sanction of that parent before you urge me further."

"Though more I should not, less I could not say," the youth was about to answer, when he was interrupted by a light tap on his shoulder. Starting to his feet, he turned, and, confronting the intruder, his looks fell on the dark form and malignant visage of Magua. The deep guttural laugh of the savage sounded, at such a moment, to Duncan like the hellish taunt of a demon. Had he pursued the sudden and fierce impulse of the instant, he would have cast himself on the Huron, and committed their fortunes to the issue of a deadly struggle. But, without arms of any description, ignorant of what succor his subtle enemy could command, and charged with the safety of one who was just then dearer than ever to his heart, he no sooner entertained than he abandoned the desperate intention.

"What is your purpose?" said Alice, meekly folding her arms on her bosom, and struggling to conceal an agony of apprehension in behalf of Heyward, in the usual cold and distant manner with which she received the visits of her captor.

The exulting Indian had resumed his austere countenance, though he drew warily back before the menacing glance of the young man's fiery eye. He regarded both his captives for a moment with a steady look, and then stepping aside, he dropped a log of wood across a door different from that by which Duncan had entered. The latter now comprehended the manner of his surprise, and believing himself irretrievably lost, he drew Alice to his bosom, and stood prepared to meet a

fate which he hardly regretted, since it was to be suffered in such company. But Magua meditated no immediate violence. His first measures were very evidently taken to secure his new captive; nor did he even bestow a second glance at the motionless forms in the centre of the cavern, until he had completely cut off every hope of retreat through the private outlet he had himself used. He was watched in all his movements by Heyward, who, however, remained firm, still folding the fragile form of Alice to his heart, at once too proud and too hopeless to ask favor of an enemy so often foiled. When Magua had effected his object he approached his prisoners, and said in English —

“The pale-faces trap the cunning beavers; but the redskins know how to take the Yengeese.”

“Huron, do your worst!” exclaimed the excited Heyward, forgetful that a double stake was involved in his life; “you and your vengeance are alike despised.”

“Will the white man speak these words at the stake?” asked Magua; manifesting, at the same time, how little faith he had in the other’s resolution by the sneer that accompanied his words.

“Here; singly to your face, or in the presence of your nation.”

“Le Renard Subtil is a great chief!” returned the Indian; “he will go and bring his young men to see how bravely a pale-face can laugh at the tortures.”

He turned away while speaking, and was about to leave the place through the avenue by which Duncan had approached, when a growl caught his ear, and caused him to hesitate. The figure of the bear appeared in the door, where it sat, rolling from side to side in its customary restlessness. Magua, like the father of the sick woman, eyed it keenly for a moment, as if to ascertain its character. He was far above the more vulgar superstitions of his tribe, and so soon as he recognized the well-known attire of the conjurer, he prepared to pass it in cool contempt. But a louder and more threatening growl caused him again to pause. Then he seemed as if suddenly resolved to trifle no longer, and moved resolutely forward. The mimic animal, which had advanced a little, retired slowly in his front, until it arrived again at the pass, when rearing on its hinder legs it beat the air with its paws, in the manner practised by its brutal prototype.

“Fool!” exclaimed the chief, in Huron, “go play with the children and squaws; leave men to their wisdom.”

He once more endeavored to pass the supposed empiric, scorning even the parade of threatening to use the knife, or tomahawk, that was pendent from his belt. Suddenly the beast extended its arms, or rather legs, and inclosed him in a grasp that might have vied with the far-famed power of the “bear’s hug” itself. Heyward had watched the whole procedure, on the part of Hawkeye, with breathless interest. At first he relinquished his hold of Alice; then he caught up a thong of buckskin, which had been used around some bundle, and when he beheld his enemy with his two arms pinned to his side by the iron muscles of the scout, he rushed upon him, and effectually secured them there. Arms, legs, and feet were encircled in twenty folds of the thong, in less time than we have taken to record the circumstance. When the formidable Huron was completely pinioned, the scout released his hold, and Duncan laid his enemy on his back, utterly helpless.

Throughout the whole of this sudden and extraordinary operation, Magua, though he had struggled violently, until assured he was in the hands of one whose nerves were far better strung than his own, had not uttered the slightest exclamation. But when Hawkeye, by way of making a summary explanation of his conduct, removed the shaggy jaws of the beast, and exposed his own rugged and earnest countenance to the gaze of the Huron, the philosophy of the latter was so far mastered as to permit him to utter the never-failing —

“Hugh!”

“Ay! you’ve found your tongue,” said his undisturbed conqueror; “now, in order that you shall not use it to our ruin, I must make free to stop your mouth.”

As there was no time to be lost, the scout immediately set about effecting so necessary a precaution; and when he had gagged the Indian, his enemy might safely have been considered as *hors de combat*.

“By what place did the imp enter?” asked the industrious scout, when his work was ended. “Not a soul has passed my way since you left me.”

Duncan pointed out the door by which Magua had come, and which now presented too many obstacles to a quick retreat.

“Bring on the gentle one, then,” continued his friend; “we must make a push for the woods by the other outlet.”

“Tis impossible!” said Duncan; “fear has overcome her, and she is helpless. Alice! my sweet, my own Alice, arouse

yourself; now is the moment to fly. 'Tis in vain! she hears, but is unable to follow. Go, noble and worthy friend; save yourself, and leave me to my fate!"

"Every trail has its end, and every calamity brings its lesson!" returned the scout. "There, wrap her in them Indian cloths. Conceal all of her little form. Nay, that foot has no fellow in the wilderness; it will betray her. All, every part. Now take her in your arms, and follow. Leave the rest to me."

Duncan, as may be gathered from the words of his companion, was eagerly obeying; and as the other finished speaking, he took the light person of Alice in his arms, and followed on the footsteps of the scout. They found the sick woman as they had left her, still alone, and passed swiftly on, by the natural gallery, to the place of entrance. As they approached the little door of bark, a murmur of voices without announced that the friends and relatives of the invalid were gathered about the place, patiently awaiting a summons to re-enter.

"If I open my lips to speak," Hawkeye whispered, "my English, which is the genuine tongue of a white-skin, will tell the varlets that an enemy is among them. You must give 'em your jargon, major; and say that we have shut the evil spirit in the cave, and are taking the woman to the woods in order to find strengthening roots. Practyse all your cunning, for it is a lawful undertaking."

The door opened a little, as if one without was listening to the proceedings within, and compelled the scout to cease his directions. A fierce growl repelled the eavesdropper, and then the scout boldly threw open the covering of bark, and left the place, enacting the character of the bear as he proceeded. Duncan kept close at his heels, and so found himself in the centre of a cluster of twenty anxious relatives and friends.

The crowd fell back a little, and permitted the father, and one who appeared to be the husband of the woman, to approach.

"Has my brother driven away the evil spirit?" demanded the former. "What has he in his arms?"

"Thy child," returned Duncan, gravely; "the disease has gone out of her; it is shut up in the rocks. I take the woman to a distance, where I will strengthen her against any further attacks. She shall be in the wigwam of the young man when the sun comes again."

When the father had translated the meaning of the stranger's words into the Huron language, a suppressed murmur announced the satisfaction with which the intelligence was received. The chief himself waved his hand for Duncan to proceed, saying aloud, in a firm voice, and with a lofty manner —

"Go; I am a man, and I will enter the rock and fight the wicked one."

Heyward had gladly obeyed, and was already past the little group, when these startling words arrested him.

"Is my brother mad?" he exclaimed; "is he cruel! He will meet the disease, and it will enter him; or he will drive out the disease, and it will chase his daughter into the woods. No; let my children wait without, and if the spirit appears beat him down with clubs. He is cunning, and will bury himself in the mountain, when he sees how many are ready to fight him."

This singular warning had the desired effect. Instead of entering the cavern, the father and husband drew their tomahawks, and posted themselves in readiness to deal their vengeance on the imaginary tormentor of their sick relative, while the women and children broke branches from the bushes, or seized fragments of the rock, with a similar intention. At this favorable moment the counterfeit conjurers disappeared.

Hawkeye, at the same time that he had presumed so far on the nature of the Indian superstitions, was not ignorant that they were rather tolerated than relied on by the wisest of the chiefs. He well knew the value of time in the present emergency. Whatever might be the extent of the self-delusion of his enemies, and however it had tended to assist his schemes, the slightest cause of suspicion, acting on the subtle nature of an Indian, would be likely to prove fatal. Taking the path, therefore, that was most likely to avoid observation, he rather skirted than entered the village. The warriors were still to be seen in the distance, by the fading light of the fires, stalking from lodge to lodge. But the children had abandoned their sports for their beds of skins, and the quiet of night was already beginning to prevail over the turbulence and excitement of so busy and important an evening.

Alice revived under the renovating influence of the open air, and as her physical rather than her mental powers had been the subject of weakness, she stood in no need of any explanation of that which had occurred.

"Now let me make an effort to walk," she said, when they had entered the forest, blushing, though unseen, that she had not been sooner able to quit the arms of Duncan; "I am indeed restored."

“Nay, Alice, you are yet too weak.”

The maiden struggled gently to release herself, and Heyward was compelled to part with his precious burden. The representative of the bear had certainly been an entire stranger to the delicious emotions of the lover while his arms encircled his mistress; and he was, perhaps, a stranger also to the nature of that feeling of ingenuous shame that oppressed the trembling Alice. But when he found himself at a suitable distance from the lodges he made a halt, and spoke on a subject of which he was thoroughly the master.

“This path will lead you to the brook,” he said; “follow its northern bank until you come to a fall; and mount the hill on your right, and you will see the fires of the other people. There you must go and demand protection; if they are true Delawares, you will be safe. A distant flight with that gentle one, just now, is impossible. The Hurons would follow up our trail, and master our scalps, before we had got a dozen miles. Go, and Providence be with you.”

“And you!” demanded Heyward, in surprise; “surely we part not here?”

“The Hurons hold the pride of the Delawares; the last of the high blood of the Mohicans is in their power,” returned the scout; “I go to see what can be done in his favor. Had they mastered your scalp, major, a knave should have fallen for every hair it held, as I promised; but if the young Sagamore is to be led to the stake, the Indians shall see also how a man without a cross can die.”

Not in the least offended with the decided preference that the sturdy woodsman gave to one who might, in some degree, be called the child of his adoption, Duncan still continued to urge such reasons against so desperate an effort as presented themselves. He was aided by Alice, who mingled her entreaties with those of Heyward that he would abandon a resolution that promised so much danger, with so little hope of success. Their eloquence and ingenuity were expended in vain. The scout heard them attentively, but impatiently, and finally closed the discussion, by answering, in a tone that instantly silenced Alice, while it told Heyward how fruitless any further remonstrances would be —

“I have heard,” he said, “that there is a feeling in youth which binds man to woman closer than the father is tied to the son. It may be so. I have seldom been where women of my color dwell; but such may be the gifts of nature in the settlements. You have risked life, and all that is dear to you, to bring off this gentle one, and I suppose that some such disposition is at the bottom of it all. As for me, I taught the lad the real character of a rifle; and well has he paid me for it. I have fought at his side in many a bloody scrimmage; and so long as I could hear the crack of his piece in one ear, and that of the Sagamore in the other, I knew no enemy was on my back. Winters and summers, nights and days, have we roved the wilderness in company, eating of the same dish, one sleeping while the other watched; and afore it shall be said that Uncas was taken to the torment, and I at hand — There is but a single Ruler of us all, whatever may be the color of the skin; and Him I call to witness, that before the Mohican boy shall perish for the want of a friend, good faith shall depart the ‘arth, and ‘Killdeer’ become as harmless as the tooting we’pon of the singer!” Duncan released his hold on the arm of the scout, who turned, and steadily retraced his steps towards the lodges. After pausing a moment to gaze at his retiring form, the successful and yet sorrowful Heyward, and Alice, took their way together towards the distant village of the Delawares.

## CHAPTER 26

"Bot.— *Let me play the lion too.*"

—MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Notwithstanding the high resolution of Hawkeye, he fully comprehended all the difficulties and dangers he was about to incur. In his return to the camp, his acute and practised intellects were intently engaged in devising means to counteract a watchfulness and suspicion on the part of his enemies, that he knew were, in no degree, inferior to his own. Nothing but the color of his skin had saved the lives of Magua and the conjurer, who would have been the first victims sacrificed to his own security, had not the scout believed such an act, however congenial it might be to the nature of an Indian, utterly unworthy of one who boasted a descent from men that knew no cross of blood. Accordingly, he trusted to the withes and ligaments with which he had bound his captives, and pursued his way directly towards the centre of the lodges.

As he approached the buildings, his steps became more deliberate, and his vigilant eye suffered no sign, whether friendly or hostile, to escape him. A neglected hut was a little in advance of the others, and appeared as if it had been deserted when half completed — most probably on account of failing in some of the more important requisites; such as food or water. A faint light glimmered through its cracks, however, and announced that, notwithstanding its imperfect structure, it was not without a tenant. Thither, then, the scout proceeded, like a prudent general, who was about to feel the advanced positions of his enemy, before he hazarded the main attack.

Throwing himself into a suitable posture for the beast he represented, Hawkeye crawled to a little opening, where he might command a view of the interior. It proved to be the abiding-place of David Gamut. Hither the faithful singing-master had now brought himself, together with all his sorrows, his apprehensions, and his meek dependence on the protection of Providence. At the precise moment when his ungainly person came under the observation of the scout, in the manner just mentioned, the woodsman himself, though in his assumed character, was the subject of the solitary being's profoundest reflections.

However implicit the faith of David was in the performance of ancient miracles, he eschewed the belief of any direct supernatural agency in the management of modern morality. In other words, while he had implicit faith in the ability of Balsam's ass to speak, he was somewhat skeptical on the subject of a bear's singing; and yet he had been assured of the latter, on the testimony of his own exquisite organs. There was something in his air and manner that betrayed to the scout the utter confusion of the state of his mind. He was seated on a pile of brush, a few twigs from which occasionally fed his low fire, with his head leaning on his arm, in a posture of melancholy musing. The costume of the votary of music had undergone no other alteration from that so lately described, except that he had covered his bald head with the triangular beaver, which had not proved sufficiently alluring to excite the cupidity of any of his captors.

The ingenious Hawkeye, who recalled the hasty manner in which the other had abandoned his post at the bedside of the sick woman, was not without his suspicions concerning the subject of so much solemn deliberation. First making the circuit of the hut, and ascertaining that it stood quite alone, and that the character of its inmate was likely to protect it from visitors, he ventured through its low door, into the very presence of Gamut. The position of the latter brought the fire between them; and when Hawkeye had seated himself on end, near a minute elapsed, during which the two remained regarding each other without speaking. The suddenness and the nature of the surprise had nearly proved too much for — we will not say the philosophy — but for the faith and resolution of David. He fumbled for his pitch-pipe, and arose with a confused intention of attempting a musical exorcism.

"Dark and mysterious monster!" he exclaimed, while with trembling hands he disposed of his auxiliary eyes, and sought his never-failing resource in trouble, the gifted version of the Psalms: "I know not your nature nor intents; but if aught you meditate against the person and rights of one of the humblest servants of the temple, listen to the inspired language of the youth of Israel, and repent."

The bear shook his shaggy sides, and then a well-known voice replied —

"Put up the tooting we'pon, and teach your throat modesty. Five words of plain and comprehensible English are worth, just now, an hour of squalling."

"What art thou!" demanded David, utterly disqualified to pursue his original intention, and nearly gasping for breath.

"A man like yourself; and one whose blood is as little tainted by the cross of a bear, or an Indian, as your own. Have you so soon forgotten from whom you received the foolish instrument you hold in your hand?"

"Can these things be?" returned David, breathing more freely, as the truth began to dawn upon him. "I have found many marvels during my sojourn with the heathen, but surely nothing to excel this!"

"Come, come," returned Hawkeye, uncasing his honest countenance, the better to assure the wavering confidence of his companion; "you may see a skin, which, if it be not as white as one of the gentle ones, has no tinge of red to it that the winds of heaven and the sun have not bestowed. Now let us to business."

"First tell me of the maiden, and of the youth who so bravely sought her," interrupted David.

"Ay, they are happily freed from the tomahawks of these varlets. But can you put me on the scent of Uncas?"

"The young man is in bondage, and much I fear his death is decreed. I greatly mourn that one so well disposed should die in his ignorance, and I have sought a goodly hymn —"

"Can you lead me to him?"

"The task will not be difficult," returned David, hesitating; "though I greatly fear your presence would rather increase than mitigate his unhappy fortunes."

"No more words, but lead on," returned Hawkeye, concealing his face again, and setting the example in his own person, by instantly quitting the lodge.

As they proceeded, the scout ascertained that his companion found access to Uncas, under privilege of his imaginary infirmity, aided by the favor he had acquired with one of the guards, who, in consequence of speaking a little English, had been selected by David as the subject of a religious conversation. How far the Huron comprehended the intentions of his new friend, may well be doubted; but as exclusive attention is as flattering to a savage as to a more civilized individual, it had produced the effect we have mentioned. It is unnecessary to repeat the shrewd manner with which the scout extracted these particulars from the simple David; neither shall we dwell in this place on the nature of the instructions he delivered, when completely master of all the necessary facts; as the whole will be sufficiently explained to the reader in the course of the narrative.

The lodge in which Uncas was confined was in the very centre of the village, and in a situation, perhaps, more difficult than any other to approach, or leave, without observation. But it was not the policy of Hawkeye to affect the least concealment. Presuming on his disguise, and his ability to sustain the character he had assumed, he took the most plain and direct route to the place. The hour, however, afforded him some little of that protection which he appeared so much to despise. The boys were already buried in sleep, and all the women, and most of the warriors, had retired to their lodges for the night. Four or five of the latter only lingered about the door of the prison of Uncas, wary but close observers of the manner of their captive.

At the sight of Gamut, accompanied by one in the well known masquerade of their most distinguished conjurer, they readily made way for them both. Still they betrayed no intention to depart. On the other hand, they were evidently disposed to remain bound to the place by an additional interest in the mysterious mummeries that they of course expected from such a visit.

From the total inability of the scout to address the Hurons in their own language, he was compelled to trust the conversation entirely to David. Notwithstanding the simplicity of the latter, he did ample justice to the instructions he had received, more than fulfilling the strongest hopes of his teacher.

"The Delawares are women!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to the savage who had a slight understanding of the language in which he spoke; "the Yengeese, my foolish countrymen, have told them to take up the tomahawk, and strike their fathers in the Canadas, and they have forgotten their sex. Does my brother wish to hear Le Cerf Agile ask for his petticoats, and see him weep before the Hurons, at the stake?"

The exclamation "Hugh!" delivered in a strong tone of assent, announced the gratification the savage would receive in witnessing such an exhibition of weakness in an enemy so long hated and so much feared.

"Then let him step aside, and the cunning man will blow upon the dog! Tell it to my brothers."

The Huron explained the meaning of David to his fellows, who, in their turn, listened to the project with that sort of



satisfaction that their untamed spirits might be expected to find in such a refinement in cruelty. They drew back a little from the entrance, and motioned to the supposed conjurer to enter. But the bear, instead of obeying, maintained the seat it had taken, and growled.

"The cunning man is afraid that his breath will blow upon his brothers, and take away their courage too," continued David, improving the hint he received; "they must stand farther off."

The Hurons, who would have deemed such a misfortune the heaviest calamity that could befall them, fell back in a body, taking a position where they were out of ear-shot, though at the same time they could command a view of the entrance to the lodge. Then, as if satisfied of their safety, the scout left his position, and slowly entered the place. It was silent and gloomy, being tenanted solely by the captive, and lighted by the dying embers of a fire, which had been used for the purposes of cookery.

Uncas occupied a distant corner, in a reclining attitude, being rigidly bound, both hands and feet, by strong and painful withes. When the frightful object first presented itself to the young Mohican, he did not deign to bestow a single glance on the animal. The scout, who had left David at the door, to ascertain they were not observed, thought it prudent to preserve his disguise until assured of their privacy. Instead of speaking, therefore, he exerted himself to enact one of the antics of the animal he represented. The young Mohican, who at first believed his enemies had sent in a real beast to torment him, and try his nerves, detected, in those performances that to Heyward had appeared so accurate, certain blemishes, that at once betrayed the counterfeit. Had Hawkeye been aware of the low estimation in which the more skilful Uncas held his representations, he would probably have prolonged the entertainment a little in pique. But the scornful expression of the young man's eye admitted of so many constructions, that the worthy scout was spared the mortification of such a discovery. As soon, therefore, as David gave the pre-concerted signal, a low hissing sound was heard in the lodge, in place of the fierce growlings of the bear.

Uncas had cast his body back against the wall of the hut, and closed his eyes, as if willing to exclude so contemptible and disagreeable an object from his sight. But the moment the noise of the serpent was heard, he arose, and cast his looks on each side of him, bending his head low, and turning it inquiringly in every direction, until his keen eye rested on the shaggy monster, where it remained riveted, as though fixed by the power of a charm. Again the same sounds were repeated, evidently proceeding from the mouth of the beast. Once more the eyes of the youth roamed over the interior of the lodge, and returning to their former resting place, he uttered, in a deep, suppressed voice —

"Hawkeye!"

"Cut his bands," said Hawkeye to David, who just then approached them.

The singer did as he was ordered, and Uncas found his limbs released. At the same moment the dried skin of the animal rattled, and presently the scout arose to his feet, in proper person. The Mohican appeared to comprehend the nature of the attempt his friend had made, intuitively; neither tongue nor feature betraying another symptom of surprise. When Hawkeye had cast his shaggy vestment, which was done by simply loosing certain thongs of skin, he drew a long glittering knife, and put it in the hands of Uncas.

"The red Hurons are without," he said; "let us be ready."

At the same time he laid his finger significantly on another similar weapon, both being the fruits of his prowess among their enemies during the evening.

"We will go," said Uncas.

"Whither?"

"To the Tortoises; they are the children of my grandfathers."

"Ay, lad," said the scout in English — a language he was apt to use when a little abstracted in mind; "the same blood runs in your veins, I believe; but time and distance have a little changed its color. What shall we do with the Mingos at the door? They count six, and this singer is as good as nothing."

"The Hurons are boasters," said Uncas scornfully; "their 'totem' is a moose, and they run like snails. The Delawares are children of the tortoise, and they outstrip the deer."

"Ay, lad, there is truth in what you say; and I doubt not, on a rush, you would pass the whole nation; and, in a straight race of two miles, would be in, and get your breath again, afore a knave of them all was within hearing of the other village. But the gift of a white man lies more in his arms than in his legs. As for myself, I can brain a Huron as well as a better man;

but when it comes to a race, the knaves would prove too much for me.”

Uncas, who had already approached the door, in readiness to lead the way, now recoiled; and placed himself, once more, in the bottom of the lodge. But Hawkeye, who was too much occupied with his own thoughts to note the movement, continued speaking more to himself than to his companion.

“After all,” he said, “it is unreasonable to keep one man in bondage to the gifts of another. So, Uncas, you had better take the leap, while I put on the skin again, and trust to cunning for want of speed.”

The young Mohican made no reply, but quietly folded his arms, and leaned his body against one of the upright posts that supported the wall of the hut.

“Well,” said the scout, looking up at him, “why do you tarry? There will be time enough for me, as the knaves will give chase to you at first.”

“Uncas will stay,” was the calm reply.

“For what?”

“To fight with his father’s brother, and die with the friend of the Delawares.”

“Ay, lad,” returned Hawkeye, squeezing the hand of Uncas between his own iron fingers; “twould have been more like a Mingo than a Mohican had you left me. But I thought I would make the offer, seeing that youth commonly loves life. Well, what can’t be done by main courage, in war, must be done by circumvention. Put on the skin; I doubt not you can play the bear nearly as well as myself.”

Whatever might have been the private opinion of Uncas of their respective abilities in this particular, his grave countenance manifested no opinion of his own superiority. He silently and expeditiously encased himself in the covering of the beast, and then awaited such other movements as his more aged companion saw fit to dictate.

“Now, friend,” said Hawkeye, addressing David, “an exchange of garments will be a great convenience to you, inasmuch as you are but little accustomed to the make-shifts of the wilderness. Here, take my hunting shirt and cap, and give me your blanket and hat. You must trust me with the book and spectacles, as well as the tooter, too; if we ever meet again, in better times, you shall have all back again, with many thanks into the bargain.”

David parted with the several articles named with a readiness that would have done great credit to his liberality, had he not certainly profited, in many particulars, by the exchange. Hawkeye was not long in assuming his borrowed garments; and when his restless eyes were hid behind the glasses, and his head was surmounted by the triangular beaver, as their statures were not dissimilar, he might readily have passed for the singer by star-light. As soon as these dispositions were made, the scout turned to David, and gave him his parting instructions.

“Are you much given to cowardice?” he bluntly asked, by way of obtaining a suitable understanding of the whole case before he ventured a prescription.

“My pursuits are peaceful, and my temper, I humbly trust, is greatly given to mercy and love,” returned David, a little nettled at so direct an attack on his manhood; “but there are none who can say that I have ever forgotten my faith in the Lord, even in the greatest straits.”

“Your chiefest danger will be at the moment when the savages find out that they have been deceived. If you are not then knocked in the head, your being a non-composser will protect you; and you’ll then have good reason to expect to die in your bed. If you stay, it must be to sit down here in the shadow, and take the part of Uncas, until such times as the cunning of the Indians discover the cheat, when, as I have already said, your time of trial will come. So choose for yourself — to make a rush or tarry here.”

“Even so,” said David, firmly; “I will abide in the place of the Delaware. Bravely and generously has he battled in my behalf; and this, and more, will I dare in his service.”

“You have spoken as a man, and like one who, under wiser schooling, would have been brought to better things. Hold your head down, and draw in your legs; their formation might tell the truth too early. Keep silent as long as may be; and it would be wise, when you do speak, to break out suddenly in one of your shoutings, which will serve to remind the Indians that you are not altogether as responsible as men should be. If, however, they take your scalp, as I trust and believe they will not, depend on it, Uncas and I will not forget the deed, but revenge it as becomes true warriors and trusty friends.”

“Hold!” said David, perceiving that with this assurance they were about to leave him; “I am an unworthy and humble

follower of One who taught not the damnable principle of revenge. Should I fall, therefore, seek no victims to my manes, but rather forgive my destroyers; and if you remember them at all, let it be in prayers for the enlightening of their minds, and for their eternal welfare."

The scout hesitated, and appeared to muse.

"There is a principle in that," he said, "different from the law of the woods; and yet it is fair and noble to reflect upon." Then, heaving a heavy sigh, probably among the last he ever drew in pining for a condition he had so long abandoned, he added, "It is what I would wish to practise, myself, as one without a cross of blood, though it is not always easy to deal with an Indian as you would with a fellow Christian. God bless you, friend; I do believe your scent is not greatly wrong, when the matter is duly considered, and keeping eternity before the eyes, though much depends on the natural gifts, and the force of temptation."

So saying, the scout returned and shook David cordially by the hand; after which act of friendship he immediately left the lodge, attended by the new representative of the beast.

The instant Hawkeye found himself under the observation of the Hurons, he drew up his tall form in the rigid manner of David, threw out his arm in the act of keeping time, and commenced what he intended for an imitation of his psalmody. Happily for the success of this delicate adventure, he had to deal with ears but little practised in the concord of sweet sounds, or the miserable effort would infallibly have been detected. It was necessary to pass within a dangerous proximity of the dark group of the savages, and the voice of the scout grew louder as they drew nigher. When at the nearest point, the Huron who spoke the English thrust out an arm, and stopped the supposed singing-master.

"The Delaware dog!" he said, leaning forward, and peering through the dim light to catch the expression of the other's features; "is he afraid? will the Hurons hear his groans?"

A growl so exceedingly fierce and natural proceeded from the beast, that the young Indian released his hold and started aside, as if to assure himself that it was not a veritable bear, and no counterfeit, that was rolling before him. Hawkeye, who feared his voice would betray him to his subtle enemies, gladly profited by the interruption, to break out anew in such a burst of musical expression as would, probably, in a more refined state of society have been termed "a grand crash." Among his actual auditors, however, it merely gave him an additional claim to that respect which they never withhold from such as are believed to be the subjects of mental alienation. The little knot of Indians drew back in a body, and suffered, as they thought, the conjurer and his inspired assistant to proceed.

It required no common exercise of fortitude in Uncas and the scout, to continue the dignified and deliberate pace they had assumed in passing the lodges; especially as they immediately perceived that curiosity had so far mastered fear, as to induce the watchers to approach the hut, in order to witness the effect of the incantations. The least injudicious or impatient movement on the part of David might betray them, and time was absolutely necessary to insure the safety of the scout. The loud noise the latter conceived it politic to continue, drew many curious gazers to the doors of the different huts as they passed; and once or twice a dark-looking warrior stepped across their path, led to the act by superstition or watchfulness. They were not, however, interrupted; the darkness of the hour, and the coldness of the attempt, proving their principal friends.

The adventurers had got clear of the village, and were now swiftly approaching the shelter of the woods, when a loud and long cry arose from the lodge where Uncas had been confined. The Mohican started on his feet, and shook his shaggy covering, as though the animal he counterfeited was about to make some desperate effort.

"Hold!" said the scout, grasping his friend by the shoulder, "let them yell again! 'Twas nothing but wonderment."

He had no occasion to delay, for the next instant a burst of cries filled the outer air, and ran along the whole extent of the village. Uncas cast his skin, and stepped forth in his own beautiful proportions. Hawkeye tapped him lightly on the shoulder, and glided ahead.

"Now let the devils strike our scent!" said the scout, tearing two rifles, with all their attendant accoutrements, from beneath a bush, and flourishing "Killdeer" as he handed Uncas his weapon; "two, at least, will find it to their deaths."

Then throwing their pieces to a low trail, like sportsmen in readiness for their game, they dashed forward, and were soon buried in the sombre darkness of the forest.

## CHAPTER 27

*"ANT. I shall remember:  
When Caesar says DO THIS, it is performed."*

—JULIUS CAESAR.

The impatience of the savages who lingered about the prison of Uncas, as has been seen, had overcome their dread of the conjurer's breath. They stole cautiously, and with beating hearts, to a crevice, through which the faint light of the fire was glimmering. For several minutes they mistook the form of David for that of their prisoner; but the very accident which Hawkeye had foreseen occurred. Tired of keeping the extremities of his long person so near together, the singer gradually suffered the lower limbs to extend themselves, until one of his misshapen feet actually came in contact with and shoved aside the embers of the fire. At first the Hurons believed the Delaware had been thus deformed by witchcraft. But when David, unconscious of being observed, turned his head, and exposed his simple, mild countenance, in place of the haughty lineaments of their prisoner, it would have exceeded the credulity of even a native to have doubted any longer. They rushed together into the lodge, and laying their hands, with but little ceremony, on their captive, immediately detected the imposition. Then arose the cry first heard by the fugitives. It was succeeded by the most frantic and angry demonstrations of vengeance. David, however firm in his determination to cover the retreat of his friends, was compelled to believe that his own final hour had come. Deprived of his book and his pipe, he was fain to trust to a memory that rarely failed him on such subjects; and breaking forth in a loud and impassioned strain, he endeavored to soothe his passage into the other world, by singing the opening verse of a funeral anthem. The Indians were seasonably reminded of his infirmity, and rushing into the open air, they aroused the village in the manner described.

A native warrior fights as he sleeps, without the protection of anything defensive. The sounds of the alarm were, therefore, hardly uttered, before two hundred men were afoot, and ready for the battle or the chase, as either might be required. The escape was soon known; and the whole tribe crowded, in a body, around the council-lodge, impatiently awaiting the instruction of their chiefs. In such a sudden demand on their wisdom, the presence of the cunning Magua could scarcely fail of being needed. His name was mentioned, and all looked round in wonder that he did not appear. Messengers were then despatched to his lodge, requiring his presence.

In the meantime, some of the swiftest and most discreet of the young men were ordered to make the circuit of the clearing, under cover of the woods, in order to ascertain that their suspected neighbors, the Delawares, designed no mischief. Women and children ran to and fro; and in short, the whole encampment exhibited another scene of wild and savage confusion. Gradually, however, these symptoms of disorder diminished; and in a few minutes the oldest and most distinguished chiefs were assembled in the lodge, in grave consultation.

The clamor of many voices soon announced that a party approached, who might be expected to communicate some intelligence that would explain the mystery of the novel surprise. The crowd without gave way, and several warriors entered the place, bringing with them the hapless conjurer, who had been left so long by the scout in duress.

Notwithstanding this man was held in very unequal estimation among the Hurons, some believing implicitly in his power, and others deeming him an impostor, he was now listened to by all with the deepest attention. When his brief story was ended, the father of the sick woman stepped forth, and, in a few pithy expressions, related, in his turn, what he knew. These two narratives gave a proper direction to the subsequent inquiries, which were now made with the characteristic cunning of savages.

Instead of rushing in a confused and disorderly throng to the cavern, ten of the wisest and firmest among the chiefs were selected to prosecute the investigation. As no time was to be lost, the instant the choice was made the individuals appointed rose in a body, and left the place without speaking. On reaching the entrance, the younger men in advance made way for their seniors; and the whole proceeded along the low, dark gallery, with the firmness of warriors ready to devote themselves to the public good, though, at the same time, secretly doubting the nature of the power with which they were about to contend.

The outer apartment of the cavern was silent and gloomy. The woman lay in her usual place and posture, though there were those present who affirmed they had seen her borne to the woods, by the supposed "medicine of the white men." Such

a direct and palpable contradiction of the tale related by the father, caused all eyes to be turned on him. Chafed by the silent imputation, and inwardly troubled by so unaccountable a circumstance, the chief advanced to the side of the bed, and stooping, cast an incredulous look at the features, as if distrusting their reality. His daughter was dead.

The unerring feeling of nature, for a moment prevailed, and the old warrior hid his eyes in sorrow. Then recovering his self-possession, he faced his companions, and pointing towards the corpse, he said, in the language of his people —

“The wife of my young man has left us! the Great Spirit is angry with his children.”

The mournful intelligence was received in solemn silence. After a short pause, one of the elder Indians was about to speak, when a dark-looking object was seen rolling out of an adjoining apartment, into the very centre of the room where they stood. Ignorant of the nature of the beings they had to deal with, the whole party drew back a little, and gazed in admiration, until the object fronted the light, and rising on end, exhibited the distorted, but still fierce and sullen features of Magua. The discovery was succeeded by a general exclamation of amazement.

As soon, however, as the true situation of the chief was understood, several ready knives appeared, and his limbs and tongue were quickly released. The Huron arose, and shook himself like a lion quitting his lair. Not a word escaped him, though his hand played convulsively with the handle of his knife, while his lowering eyes scanned the whole party, as if they sought an object suited to the first burst of his vengeance.

It was happy for Uncas and the scout, and even David, that they were all beyond the reach of his arm at such a moment; for, assuredly, no refinement in cruelty would then have deferred their deaths, in opposition to the promptings of the fierce temper that nearly choked him. Meeting everywhere faces that he knew as friends, the savage grated his teeth together like rasps of iron, and swallowed his passion for want of a victim on whom to vent it. This exhibition of anger was noted by all present; and, from an apprehension of exasperating a temper that was already chafed nearly to madness, several minutes were suffered to pass before another word was uttered. When, however, suitable time had elapsed, the oldest of the party spoke.

“My friend has found an enemy,” he said. “Is he nigh, that the Hurons may take revenge?”

“Let the Delaware die!” exclaimed Magua, in a voice of thunder.

Another long and expressive silence was observed, and was broken, as before, with due precaution, by the same individual.

“The Mohican is swift of foot, and leaps far,” he said; “but my young men are on his trail.”

“Is he gone?” demanded Magua, in tones so deep and guttural, that they seemed to proceed from his inmost chest.

“An evil spirit has been among us, and the Delaware has blinded our eyes.”

“An evil spirit!” repeated the other, mockingly; “’tis the spirit that has taken the lives of so many Hurons; the spirit that slew my young men at ‘the tumbling river’; that took their scalps at the ‘healing spring’; and who has now bound the arms of Le Renard Subtil!”

“Of whom does my friend speak?”

“Of the dog who carries the heart and cunning of a Huron under a pale skin — La Longue Carabine.”

The pronunciation of so terrible a name produced the usual effect among his auditors. But when time was given for reflection, and the warriors remembered that their formidable and daring enemy had even been in the bosom of their encampment, working injury, fearful rage took the place of wonder, and all those fierce passions with which the bosom of Magua had just been struggling were suddenly transferred to his companions. Some among them gnashed their teeth in anger, others vented their feelings in yells, and some, again beat the air as frantically as if the object of their resentment were suffering under their blows. But this sudden outburst of temper as quickly subsided in the still and sullen restraint they most affected, in their moments of inaction.

Magua who had in his turn found leisure for reflection, now changed his manner, and assumed the air of one who knew how to think and act with a dignity worthy of so grave a subject.

“Let us go to my people,” he said; “they wait for us.”

His companions consented in silence, and the whole of the savage party left the cavern and returned to the council-lodge. When they were seated, all eyes turned on Magua, who understood, from such an indication, that, by common consent, they had devolved the duty of relating what had passed on him. He arose, and told his tale without duplicity or

reservation. The whole deception practised by both Duncan and Hawkeye was, of course, laid naked; and no room was found, even for the most superstitious of the tribe, any longer to affix a doubt on the character of the occurrences. It was but too apparent that they had been insultingly, shamefully, disgracefully deceived. When he had ended, and resumed his seat, the collected tribe — for his auditors, in substance, included all the fighting men of the party — sat regarding each other like men astonished equally at the audacity and the success of their enemies. The next consideration, however, was the means and opportunities for revenge.

Additional pursuers were sent on the trail of the fugitives; and then the chiefs applied themselves, in earnest, to the business of consultation. Many different expedients were proposed by the elder warriors, in succession, to all of which Magua was a silent and respectful listener. That subtle savage had recovered his artifice and self-command, and now proceeded towards his object with his customary caution and skill. It was only when each one disposed to speak had uttered his sentiments, that he prepared to advance his own opinions. They were given with additional weight from the circumstance that some of the runners had already returned, and reported that their enemies had been traced so far as to leave no doubt of their having sought safety in the neighboring camp of their suspected allies, the Delawares. With the advantage of possessing this important intelligence, the chief warily laid his plans before his fellows, and, as might have been anticipated from his eloquence and cunning, they were adopted without a dissenting voice. They were, briefly, as follows, both in opinions and in motives.

It has been already stated that, in obedience to a policy rarely departed from, the sisters were separated so soon as they reached the Huron village. Magua had early discovered that in retaining the person of Alice, he possessed the most effectual check on Cora. When they parted, therefore, he kept the former within reach of his hand, consigning the one he most valued to the keeping of their allies. The arrangement was understood to be merely temporary, and was made as much with a view to flatter his neighbors as in obedience to the invariable rule of Indian policy.

While goaded incessantly by those revengeful impulses that in a savage seldom slumber, the chief was still attentive to his more permanent personal interests. The follies and disloyalty committed in his youth were to be expiated by a long and painful penance, ere he could be restored to the full enjoyment of the confidence of his ancient people; and without confidence, there could be no authority in an Indian tribe. In this delicate and arduous situation, the crafty native had neglected no means of increasing his influence; and one of the happiest of his expedients had been the success with which he had cultivated the favor of their powerful and dangerous neighbors. The result of his experiment had answered all the expectations of his policy; for the Hurons were in no degree exempt from that governing principle of nature, which induces man to value his gifts precisely in the degree that they are appreciated by others.

But, while he was making this ostensible sacrifice to general considerations, Magua never lost sight of his individual motives. The latter had been frustrated by the unlooked-for events which had placed all his prisoners beyond his control; and he now found himself reduced to the necessity of suing for favors to those whom it had so lately been his policy to oblige.

Several of the chiefs had proposed deep and treacherous schemes to surprise the Delawares, and, by gaining possession of their camp, to recover their prisoners by the same blow; for all agreed that their honor, their interests, and the peace and happiness of their dead countrymen, imperiously required them speedily to immolate some victims to their revenge. But plans so dangerous to attempt, and of such doubtful issue, Magua found little difficulty in defeating. He exposed their risk and fallacy with his usual skill; and it was only after he had removed every impediment, in the shape of opposing advice, that he ventured to propose his own projects.

He commenced by flattering the self-love of his auditors; a never-failing method of commanding attention. When he had enumerated the many different occasions on which the Hurons had exhibited their courage and prowess, in the punishment of insults, he digressed in a high encomium on the virtue of wisdom. He painted the quality, as forming the great point of difference between the beaver and other brutes; between brutes and men; and, finally, between the Hurons, in particular, and the rest of the human race. After he had sufficiently extolled the property of discretion, he undertook to exhibit in what manner its use was applicable to the present situation of their tribe. On the one hand, he said, was their great pale father, the governor of the Canadas, who had looked upon his children with a hard eye since their tomahawks had been so red; on the other, a people as numerous as themselves, who spoke a different language, possessed different interests, and loved them not, and who would be glad of any pretence to bring them in disgrace with the great white chief. Then he spoke of their necessities; of the gifts they had a right to expect for their past services; of their distance from their

proper hunting-grounds and native villages; and of the necessity of consulting prudence more, and inclination less, in so critical circumstances. When he perceived that, while the old men applauded his moderation, many of the fiercest and most distinguished of the warriors listened to these politic plans with lowering looks, he cunningly led them back to the subject which they most loved. He spoke openly of the fruits of their wisdom, which he boldly pronounced would be a complete and final triumph over their enemies. He even darkly hinted that their success might be extended, with proper caution, in such a manner as to include the destruction of all whom they had reason to hate. In short, he so blended the warlike with the artful, the obvious with the obscure, as to flatter the propensities of both parties, and to leave to each subject of hope, while neither could say it clearly comprehended his intentions.

The orator, or the politician, who can produce such a state of things, is commonly popular with his contemporaries, however he may be treated by posterity. All perceived that more was meant than was uttered, and each one believed that the hidden meaning was precisely such as his own faculties enabled him to understand, or his own wishes led him to anticipate.

In this happy state of things, it is not surprising that the management of Magua prevailed. The tribe consented to act with deliberation, and with one voice they committed the direction of the whole affair to the government of the chief who had suggested such wise and intelligible expedients.

Magua had now attained one great object of all his cunning and enterprise. The ground he had lost in the favor of his people was completely regained, and he found himself even placed at the head of affairs. He was, in truth, their ruler; and, so long as he could maintain his popularity, no monarch could be more despotic, especially while the tribe continued in a hostile country. Throwing off, therefore, the appearance of consultation, he assumed the grave air of authority necessary to support the dignity of his office.

Runners were despatched for intelligence in different directions; spies were ordered to approach and feel the encampment of the Delawares; the warriors were dismissed to their lodges, with an intimation that their services would soon be needed; and the women and children were ordered to retire, with a warning that it was their province to be silent. When these several arrangements were made, Magua passed through the village, stopping here and there to pay a visit where he thought his presence might be flattering to the individual. He confirmed his friends in their confidence, fixed the wavering, and gratified all. Then he sought his own lodge. The wife the Huron chief had abandoned, when he was chased from among his people, was dead. Children he had none; and he now occupied a hut, without companion of any sort. It was, in fact, the dilapidated and solitary structure in which David had been discovered, and whom he had tolerated in his presence, on those few occasions when they met, with the contemptuous indifference of a haughty superiority.

Hither, then, Magua retired, when his labors of policy were ended. While others slept, however, he neither knew nor sought repose. Had there been one sufficiently curious to have watched the movements of the newly elected chief, he would have seen him seated in a corner of his lodge, musing on the subject of his future plans, from the hour of his retirement to the time he had appointed for the warriors to assemble again. Occasionally the air breathed through the crevices of the hut, and the low flames that fluttered about the embers of the fire threw their wavering light on the person of the sullen recluse. At such moments it would not have been difficult to have fancied the dusky savage the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs, and plotting evil.

Long before the day dawned, however, warrior after warrior entered the solitary hut of Magua, until they had collected to the number of twenty. Each bore his rifle, and all the other accoutrements of war, though the paint was uniformly peaceful. The entrance of these fierce-looking beings was unnoticed; some seating themselves in the shadows of the place, and others standing like motionless statues, until the whole of the designated band was collected.

Then Magua arose and gave the signal to proceed, marching himself in advance. They followed their leader singly, and in that well-known order which has obtained the distinguishing appellation of "Indian file." Unlike other men engaged in the spirit-stirring business of war, they stole from their camp unostentatiously and unobserved, resembling a band of gliding spectres, more than warriors seeking the bubble reputation by deeds of desperate daring.

Instead of taking the path which led directly towards the camp of the Delawares, Magua led his party for some distance down the windings of the stream, and along the little artificial lake of the beavers. The day began to dawn as they entered the clearing which had been formed by those sagacious and industrious animals. Though Magua, who had resumed his ancient garb, bore the outline of a fox on the dressed skin which formed his robe, there was one chief of his

party who carried the beaver as his peculiar symbol, or "totem." There would have been a species of profanity in the omission, had this man passed so powerful a community of his fancied kindred, without bestowing some evidence of his regard. Accordingly, he paused, and spoke in words as kind and friendly as if he were addressing more intelligent beings. He called the animals his cousins, and reminded them that his protecting influence was the reason they remained unharmed, while so many avaricious traders were prompting the Indians to take their lives. He promised a continuance of his favors, and admonished them to be grateful. After which, he spoke of the expedition in which he was himself engaged, and intimated, though with sufficient delicacy and circumlocution, the expediency of bestowing on their relative a portion of that wisdom for which they were so renowned.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> These harangues of the beasts are frequent among the Indians. They often address their victims in this way, reproaching them for cowardice, or commending their resolution, as they may happen to exhibit fortitude, or the reverse in suffering.

During the utterance of this extraordinary address, the companions of the speaker were as grave and as attentive to his language as though they were all equally impressed with its propriety. Once or twice black objects were seen rising to the surface of the water, and the Huron expressed pleasure, conceiving that his words were not bestowed in vain. Just as he had ended his address, the head of a large beaver was thrust from the door of a lodge, whose earthen walls had been much injured, and which the party had believed, from its situation, to be uninhabited. Such an extraordinary sign of confidence was received by the orator as a highly favorable omen; and though the animal retreated a little precipitately, he was lavish of his thanks and commendations.

When Magua thought sufficient time had been lost in gratifying the family affection of the warrior, he again made the signal to proceed. As the Indians moved away in a body, and with a step that would have been inaudible to the ears of any common man, the same venerable-looking beaver once more ventured his head from its cover. Had any of the Hurons turned to look behind them, they would have seen the animal watching their movements with an interest and sagacity that might easily have been mistaken for reason. Indeed, so very distinct and intelligible were the devices of the quadruped, that even the most experienced observer would have been at a loss to account for its actions, until the moment when the party entered the forest, when the whole would have been explained, by seeing the entire animal issue from the lodge, uncasing, by the act, the grave features of Chingachgook from his mask of fur.





## CHAPTER 28

*"Brief, I pray you; for you see, 'tis a busy time with me."*

—MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

The tribe, or rather half tribe, of Delawares, which has been so often mentioned, and whose present place of encampment was so nigh the temporary village of the Hurons, could assemble about an equal number of warriors with the latter people. Like their neighbors, they had followed Montcalm into the territories of the English crown, and were making heavy and serious inroads on the hunting-grounds of the Mohawks; though they had seen fit, with the mysterious reserve so common among the natives, to withhold their assistance at the moment when it was most required. The French had accounted for this unexpected defection on the part of their ally in various ways. It was the prevalent opinion, however, that they had been influenced by veneration for the ancient treaty, that had once made them dependent on the Six Nations for military protection, and now rendered them reluctant to encounter their former masters. As for the tribe itself, it had been content to announce to Montcalm, through his emissaries, with Indian brevity, that their hatchets were dull, and time was necessary to sharpen them. The politic captain of the Canadas had deemed it wiser to submit to entertain a passive friend, than by any acts of ill-judged severity to convert him into an open enemy.

On that morning when Magua led his silent party from the settlement of the beavers into the forest, in the manner described, the sun rose upon the Delaware encampment as if it had suddenly burst upon a busy people, actively employed in all the customary avocations of high noon. The women ran from lodge to lodge, some engaged in preparing their morning's meal, a few earnestly bent on seeking the comforts necessary to their habits, but more pausing to exchange hasty and whispered sentences with their friends. The warriors were lounging in groups, musing more than they conversed; and when a few words were uttered, speaking like men who deeply weighed their opinions. The instruments of the chase were to be seen in abundance among the lodges; but none departed. Here and there a warrior was examining his arms, with an attention that is rarely bestowed on the implements, when no other enemy than the beasts of the forest is expected to be encountered. And, occasionally, the eyes of a whole group were turned simultaneously towards a large and silent lodge in the centre of the village, as if it contained the subject of their common thoughts.

During the existence of this scene, a man suddenly appeared at the farthest extremity of a platform of rock which formed the level of the village. He was without arms, and his paint tended rather to soften than increase the natural sternness of his austere countenance. When in full view of the Delawares he stopped, and made a gesture of amity, by throwing his arm upward towards heaven, and then letting it fall impressively on his breast. The inhabitants of the village answered his salute by a low murmur of welcome, and encouraged him to advance by similar indications of friendship. Fortified by these assurances, the dark figure left the brow of the natural rocky terrace, where it had stood a moment, drawn in a strong outline against the blushing morning sky, and moved with dignity into the very centre of the huts. As he approached, nothing was audible but the rattling of the light silver ornaments that loaded his arms and neck, and the tinkling of the little bells that fringed his deer-skin moccasins. He made, as he advanced, many courteous signs of greeting to the men he passed, neglecting to notice the women, however, like one who deemed their favor, in the present enterprise, of no importance. When he had reached the group in which it was evident, by the haughtiness of their common mien, that the principal chiefs were collected, the stranger paused, and then the Delawares saw that the active and erect form that stood before them was that of the well-known Huron chief, Le Renard Subtil.

His reception was grave, silent, and wary. The warriors in front stepped aside, opening the way to their most approved orator by the action; one who spoke all those languages that were cultivated among the northern aborigines.

"The wise Huron is welcome," said the Delaware, in the language of the Maquas; "he is come to eat his 'succotash,'"<sup>25</sup> with his brothers of the lakes."

<sup>25</sup> A dish composed of cracked corn and beans. It is much used also by the whites. By corn is meant maize.

"He is come," repeated Magua, bending his head with the dignity of an Eastern prince.

The chief extended his arm, and taking the other by the wrist, they once more exchanged friendly salutations. Then the Delaware invited his guest to enter his own lodge, and share his morning meal. The invitation was accepted; and the two warriors, attended by three or four of the old men, walked calmly away, leaving the rest of the tribe devoured by a desire to

understand the reasons of so unusual a visit, and yet not betraying the least impatience by sign or word.

During the short and frugal repast that followed, the conversation was extremely circumspect, and related entirely to the events of the hunt in which Magua had so lately been engaged. It would have been impossible for the most finished breeding to wear more of the appearance of considering the visit as a matter of course, than did his hosts, notwithstanding every individual present was perfectly aware that it must be connected with some secret object, and that probably of importance to themselves. When the appetites of the whole were appeased, the squaws removed the trenchers and gourd, and the two parties began to prepare themselves for a subtle trial of their wits.

"Is the face of my great Canada father turned again towards his Huron children?" demanded the orator of the Delawares.

"When was it ever otherwise?" returned Magua. "He calls my people 'most beloved.'"

The Delaware gravely bowed his acquiescence to what he knew to be false, and continued —

"The tomahawks of your young men have been very red."

"It is so; but they are now bright and dull; for the Yengeese are dead, and the Delawares are our neighbors."

The other acknowledged the pacific compliment by a gesture of the hand, and remained silent. Then Magua, as if recalled to such a recollection, by the allusion to the massacre, demanded —

"Does my prisoner give trouble to my brothers?"

"She is welcome."

"The path between the Hurons and the Delawares is short, and it is open; let her be sent to my squaws, if she gives trouble to my brother."

"She is welcome," returned the chief of the latter nation, still more emphatically.

The baffled Magua continued silent several minutes, apparently indifferent, however, to the repulse he had received in this his open effort to gain possession of Cora.

"Do my young men leave the Delawares room on the mountains for their hunts?" he at length continued.

"The Lenape are rulers of their own hills," returned the other, a little haughtily.

"It is well. Justice is the master of a redskin! Why should they brighten their tomahawks, and sharpen their knives against each other? Are not the pale-faces thicker than the swallows in the season of flowers?"

"Good!" exclaimed two or three of his auditors at the same time.

Magua waited a little, to permit his words to soften the feelings of the Delawares, before he added —

"Have there not been strange moccasins in the woods? Have not my brothers scented the feet of white men?"

"Let my Canada father come," returned the other evasively; "his children are ready to see him."

"When the great chief comes, it is to smoke with the Indians in their wigwams. The Hurons say, too, he is welcome. But the Yengeese have long arms, and legs that never tire! My young men dreamed they had seen the trail of the Yengeese nigh the village of the Delawares?"

"They will not find the Lenape asleep."

"It is well. The warrior whose eye is open can see his enemy," said Magua, once more shifting his ground, when he found himself unable to penetrate the caution of his companion. "I have brought gifts to my brother. His nation would not go on the war-path because they did not think it well; but their friends have remembered where they lived."

When he had thus announced his liberal intention, the crafty chief arose, and gravely spread his presents before the dazzled eyes of his hosts. They consisted principally of trinkets of little value, plundered from the slaughtered females of William Henry. In the division of the baubles the cunning Huron discovered no less art than in their selection. While he bestowed those of greater value on the two most distinguished warriors, one of whom was his host, he seasoned his offerings to their inferiors with such well-timed and apposite compliments, as left them no grounds of complaint. In short, the whole ceremony contained such a happy blending of the profitable with the flattering, that it was not difficult for the donor immediately to read the effect of a generosity so aptly mingled with praise, in the eyes of those he addressed.

This well-judged and politic stroke on the part of Magua was not without instantaneous results. The Delawares lost their gravity in a much more cordial expression; and the host, in particular, after contemplating his own liberal share of the

spoil for some moments with peculiar gratification, repeated with strong emphasis, the words —

“My brother is a wise chief. He is welcome!”

“The Hurons love their friends the Delawares,” returned Magua. “Why should they not? they are colored by the same sun, and their just men will hunt in the same grounds after death. The redskins should be friends, and look with open eyes on the white men. Has not my brother scented spies in the woods?”

The Delaware, whose name in English signified “Hard Heart,” an appellation that the French had translated into “Le Cœur-dur,” forgot the obduracy of purpose, which had probably obtained him so significant a title. His countenance grew very sensibly less stern, and now deigned to answer more directly.

“There have been strange moccasins about my camp. They have been tracked into my lodges.”

“Did my brother beat out the dogs?” asked Magua, without adverting in any manner to the former equivocation of the chief.

“It would not do. The stranger is always welcome to the children of the Lenape.”

“The stranger, but not the spy.”

“Would the Yengeese send their women as spies? Did not the Huron chief say he took women in the battle?”

“He told no lie. The Yengeese have sent out their scouts. They have been in my wigwams, but they found there no one to say welcome. Then they fled to the Delawares — for, say they, the Delawares are our friends; their minds are turned from their Canada father!”

This insinuation was a home thrust, and one that in a more advanced state of society, would have entitled Magua to the reputation of a skilful diplomatist. The recent defection of the tribe had, as they well knew themselves, subjected the Delawares to much reproach among their French allies; and they were now made to feel that their future actions were to be regarded with jealousy and distrust. There was no deep insight into causes and effects necessary to foresee that such a situation of things was likely to prove highly prejudicial to their future movements. Their distant villages, their hunting-grounds, and hundreds of their women and children, together with a material part of their physical force, were actually within the limits of the French territory. Accordingly, this alarming annunciation was received, as Magua intended, with manifest disapprobation, if not with alarm.

“Let my father look in my face,” said Le Cœur-dur; “he will see no change. It is true, my young men did not go out on the war-path; they had dreams for not doing so. But they love and venerate the great white chief.”

“Will he think so when he hears that his greatest enemy is fed in the camp of his children? When he is told a bloody Yengee smokes at your fire? That the pale-face who has slain so many of his friends goes in and out among the Delawares? Go! my great Canada father is not a fool!”

“Where is the Yengee that the Delawares fear?” returned the other; “who has slain my young men? who is the mortal enemy of my Great Father!”

“La Longue Carabine.”

The Delaware warriors started at the well-known name, betraying, by their amazement, that they now learnt, for the first time, one so famous among the Indian allies of France was within their power.

“What does my brother mean?” demanded Le Cœur-dur, in a tone that, by its wonder, far exceeded the usual apathy of his race.

“A Huron never lies!” returned Magua coldly, leaning his head against the side of the lodge, and drawing his slight robe across his tawny breast. “Let the Delawares count their prisoners; they will find one whose skin is neither red nor pale.”

A long and musing pause succeeded. The chief consulted apart with his companions, and messengers were despatched to collect certain others of the most distinguished men of the tribe.

As warrior after warrior dropped in, they were each made acquainted, in turn, with the important intelligence that Magua had just communicated. The air of surprise, and the usual low, deep, guttural exclamation, were common to them all. The news spread from mouth to mouth, until the whole encampment became powerfully agitated. The women suspended their labors, to catch such syllables as unguardedly fell from the lips of the consulting warriors. The boys deserted their sports, and walking fearlessly among their fathers, looked up in curious admiration, as they heard the brief

exclamations of wonder they so freely expressed at the temerity of their hated foe. In short, every occupation was abandoned for the time, and all other pursuits seemed discarded, in order that the tribe might freely indulge, after their own peculiar manner, in an open expression of feeling.

When the excitement had a little abated, the old men disposed themselves seriously to consider that which it became the honor and safety of their tribe to perform, under circumstances of so much delicacy and embarrassment. During all these movements, and in the midst of the general commotion, Magua had not only maintained his seat, but the very attitude he had originally taken, against the side of the lodge, where he continued as immovable, and, apparently, as unconcerned, as if he had no interest in the result. Not a single indication of the future intentions of his hosts, however, escaped his vigilant eyes. With his consummate knowledge of the nature of the people with whom he had to deal, he anticipated every measure on which they decided; and it might almost be said, that, in many instances, he knew their intentions, even before they became known to themselves.

The council of the Delawares was short. When it was ended, a general bustle announced that it was to be immediately succeeded by a solemn and formal assemblage of the nation. As such meetings were rare, and only called on occasions of the last importance, the subtle Huron, who still sat apart, a wily and dark observer of the proceedings, now knew that all his projects must be brought to their final issue. He therefore left the lodge, and walked silently forth to the place in front of the encampment whither the warriors were already beginning to collect.

It might have been half an hour before each individual, including even the women and children, was in his place. The delay had been created by the grave preparations that were deemed necessary to so solemn and unusual a conference. But when the sun was seen climbing above the tops of that mountain against whose bosom the Delawares had constructed their encampment, most were seated; and as his bright rays darted from behind the outline of trees that fringed the eminence, they fell upon as grave, as attentive, and as deeply interested a multitude, as was probably ever before lighted by his morning beams. Its number somewhat exceeded a thousand souls.

In a collection of such serious savages, there is never to be found any impatient aspirant after premature distinction, standing ready to move his auditors to some hasty, and, perhaps, injudicious discussion, in order that his own reputation may be the gainer. An act of so much precipitancy and presumption would seal the downfall of precocious intellect forever. It rested solely with the oldest and most experienced of the men to lay the subject of the conference before the people. Until such a one chose to make some movement, no deeds in arms, no natural gifts, nor any renown as an orator, would have justified the slightest interruption. On the present occasion, the aged warrior whose privilege it was to speak, was silent, seemingly oppressed with the magnitude of his subject. The delay had already continued long beyond the usual deliberative pause that always precedes a conference; but no sign of impatience or surprise escaped even the youngest boy. Occasionally, an eye was raised from the earth, where the looks of most were riveted, and strayed towards a particular lodge, that was, however, in no manner distinguished from those around it, except in the peculiar care that had been taken to protect it against the assaults of the weather.

At length, one of those low murmurs that are so apt to disturb a multitude, was heard, and the whole nation arose to their feet by a common impulse. At that the door of the lodge in question opened, and three men, issuing from it, slowly approached the place of consultation. They were all aged, even beyond that period to which the oldest present had reached; but one in the centre, who leaned on his companions for support, had numbered an amount of years to which the human race is seldom permitted to attain. His frame, which had once been tall and erect, like the cedar, was now bending under the pressure of more than a century. The elastic, light step of an Indian was gone, and in its place he was compelled to toil his tardy way over the ground, inch by inch. His dark, wrinkled countenance was in singular and wild contrast with the long white locks which floated on his shoulders in such thickness as to announce that generations had probably passed away since they had last been shorn.

The dress of this patriarch — for such, considering his vast age, in conjunction with his affinity and influence with his people, he might very properly be termed — was rich and imposing, though strictly after the simple fashions of the tribe. His robe was of the finest skins, which had been deprived of their fur, in order to admit of a hieroglyphical representation of various deeds in arms, done in former ages. His bosom was loaded with medals, some in massive silver, and one or two even in gold, the gifts of various Christian potentates during the long period of his life. He also wore armlets, and cinctures above the ankles, of the latter precious metal. His head, on the whole of which the hair had been permitted to grow, the pursuits of war having so long been abandoned, was encircled by a sort of plated diadem, which, in its turn, bore lesser and

more glittering ornaments, that sparkled amid the glossy hues of three drooping ostrich feathers, dyed a deep black, in touching contrast to the color of his snow-white locks. His tomahawk was nearly hid in silver, and the handle of his knife shone like a horn of solid gold.

So soon as the first hum of emotion and pleasure, which the sudden appearance of this venerated individual created, had a little subsided, the name of "Tamenund" was whispered from mouth to mouth. Magua had often heard the fame of this wise and just Delaware; a reputation that even proceeded so far as to bestow on him the rare gift of holding secret communion with the Great Spirit, and which has since transmitted his name, with some slight alteration, to the white usurpers of his ancient territory, as the imaginary tutelary saint of a vast empire. The Huron chief, therefore, stepped eagerly out a little from the throng, to a spot whence he might catch a nearer glimpse of the features of the man, whose decision was likely to produce so deep an influence on his own fortunes.

The eyes of the old man were closed, as though the organs were wearied with having so long witnessed the selfish workings of the human passions. The color of his skin differed from that of most around him, being richer and darker, the latter hue having been produced by certain delicate and mazy lines of complicated and yet beautiful figures, which had been traced over most of his person by the operation of tattooing. Notwithstanding the position of the Huron, he passed the observant and silent Magua without notice, and leaning on his two venerable supporters proceeded to the high place of the multitude, where he seated himself in the centre of his nation, with the dignity of a monarch and the air of a father.

Nothing could surpass the reverence and affection with which this unexpected visit from one who belonged rather to another world than to this, was received by his people. After a suitable and decent pause, the principal chiefs arose; and approaching the patriarch, they placed his hands reverently on their heads, seeming to entreat a blessing. The younger men were content with touching his robe, or even drawing nigh his person, in order to breathe in the atmosphere of one so aged, so just, and so valiant. None but the most distinguished among the youthful warriors even presumed so far as to perform the latter ceremony; the great mass of the multitude deeming it a sufficient happiness to look upon a form so deeply venerated, and so well beloved. When these acts of affection and respect were performed, the chiefs drew back again to their several places, and silence reigned in the whole encampment.

After a short delay, a few of the young men, to whom instructions had been whispered by one of the aged attendants of Tamenund, arose, left the crowd, and entered the lodge which has already been noted as the object of so much attention throughout that morning. In a few minutes they reappeared, escorting the individuals who had caused all these solemn preparations towards the seat of judgment. The crowd opened in a lane; and when the party had re-entered, it closed in again, forming a large and dense belt of human bodies, arranged in an open circle.



## CHAPTER 29

*"The assembly seated, rising o'er the rest,  
Achilles thus the king of men addressed."*

—POPE'S ILLAD.

Cora stood foremost among the prisoners, entwining her arms in those of Alice, in the tenderness of sisterly love. Notwithstanding the fearful and menacing array of savages on every side of her, no apprehension on her own account could prevent the noble-minded maiden from keeping her eyes fastened on the pale and anxious features of the trembling Alice. Close at their side stood Heyward, with an interest in both, that, at such a moment of intense uncertainty, scarcely knew a preponderance in favor of her whom he most loved. Hawkeye had placed himself a little in the rear, with a deference to the superior rank of his companions, that no similarity in the state of their present fortunes could induce him to forget. Uncas was not there.

When perfect silence was again restored, and after the usual long, impressive pause, one of the two aged chiefs who sat at the side of the patriarch arose, and demanded aloud, in very intelligible English —

"Which of my prisoners is La Longue Carabine?"

Neither Duncan nor the scout answered. The former, however, glanced his eyes around the dark and silent assembly, and recoiled a pace, when they fell on the malignant visage of Magua. He saw, at once, that this wily savage had some secret agency in their present arraignment before the nation, and determined to throw every possible impediment in the way of the execution of his sinister plans. He had witnessed one instance of the summary punishments of the Indians, and now dreaded that his companion was to be selected for a second. In this dilemma, with little or no time for reflection, he suddenly determined to cloak his invaluable friend, at any or every hazard to himself. Before he had time, however, to speak, the question was repeated in a louder voice, and with a clearer utterance.

"Give us arms," the young man haughtily replied, "and place us in yonder woods. Our deeds shall speak for us!"

"This is the warrior whose name has filled our ears!" returned the chief, regarding Heyward with that sort of curious interest which seems inseparable from man, when first beholding one of his fellows to whom merit or accident, virtue or crime, has given notoriety. "What has brought the white man into the camp of the Delawares?"

"My necessities. I come for food, shelter and friends."

"It cannot be. The woods are full of game. The head of a warrior needs no other shelter than a sky without clouds; and the Delawares are the enemies, and not the friends, of the Yengeese. Go! the mouth has spoken, while the heart said nothing."

Duncan, a little at a loss in what manner to proceed, remained silent; but the scout, who had listened attentively to all that passed, now advanced steadily to the front.

"That I did not answer to the call for La Longue Carabine, was not owing either to shame or fear," he said; "for neither one nor the other is the gift of an honest man. But I do not admit the right of the Mingos to bestow a name on one whose friends have been mindful of his gifts, in this particular; especially as their title is a lie, 'Killdeer' being a grooved barrel and no carabine. I am the man, however, that got the name of Nathaniel from my kin; the compliment of Hawkeye from the Delawares, who live on their own river; and whom the Iroquois have presumed to style the 'Long Rifle,' without any warranty from him who is most concerned in the matter."

The eyes of all present, which had hitherto been gravely scanning the person of Duncan, were now turned, on the instant, towards the upright iron frame of this new pretender to the distinguished appellation. It was in no degree remarkable that there should be found two who were willing to claim so great an honor, for impostors, though rare, were not unknown amongst the natives; but it was altogether material to the just and severe intentions of the Delawares, that there should be no mistake in the matter. Some of their old men consulted together in private, and then, as it would seem, they determined to interrogate their visitor on the subject.

"My brother has said that a snake crept into my camp," said the chief to Magua; "which is he?"

The Huron pointed to the scout.

“Will a wise Delaware believe the barking of a wolf?” exclaimed Duncan, still more confirmed in the evil intentions of his ancient enemy: “a dog never lies, but when was a wolf known to speak the truth?”

The eyes of Magua flashed fire; but, suddenly recollecting the necessity of maintaining his presence of mind, he turned away in silent disdain, well assured that the sagacity of the Indians would not fail to extract the real merits of the point in controversy. He was not deceived; for, after another short consultation, the wary Delaware turned to him again, and expressed the determination of the chiefs, though in the most considerate language.

“My brother has been called a liar,” he said, “and his friends are angry. They will show that he has spoken the truth. Give my prisoners guns, and let them prove which is the man.”

Magua affected to consider the expedient, which he well knew proceeded from distrust of himself, as a compliment, and made a gesture of acquiescence, well content that his veracity should be supported by so skilful a marksman as the scout. The weapons were instantly placed in the hands of the friendly opponents, and they were bid to fire over the heads of the seated multitude at an earthen vessel, which lay, by accident, on a stump some fifty yards from the place where they stood.

Heyward smiled to himself at the idea of a competition with the scout, though he determined to persevere in the deception, until apprised of the real designs of Magua. Raising his rifle with the utmost care, and renewing his aim three several times, he fired. The bullet cut the wood within a few inches of the vessel; and a general exclamation of satisfaction announced that the shot was considered a proof of great skill in the use of the weapon. Even Hawkeye nodded his head, as if he would say, it was better than he had expected. But, instead of manifesting an intention to contend with the successful marksman, he stood leaning on his rifle for more than a minute, like a man who was completely buried in thought. From this reverie he was, however, awakened by one of the young Indians who had furnished the arms, and who now touched his shoulder, saying, in exceedingly broken English —

“Can the pale-face beat it?”

“Yes, Huron!” exclaimed the scout, raising the short rifle in his right hand, and shaking it at Magua, with as much apparent ease as if it were a reed; “yes, Huron, I could strike you now, and no power of earth could prevent the deed! The soaring hawk is not more certain of the dove than I am this moment of you, did I choose to send a bullet to your heart! Why should I not? Why! — because the gifts of my color forbid it, and I might draw down evil on tender and innocent heads. If you know such a being as God, thank Him, therefore, in your inward soul; for you have reason.”

The flushed countenance, angry eye, and swelling figure of the scout, produced a sensation of secret awe in all that heard him. The Delawares held their breath in expectation; but Magua himself, even while he distrusted the forbearance of his enemy, remained immovable and calm, where he stood wedged in by the crowd, as one who grew to the spot.

“Beat it,” replied the young Delaware at the elbow of the scout.

“Beat what, fool! — what!” exclaimed Hawkeye, still flourishing the weapon angrily above his head, though his eye no longer sought the person of Magua.

“If the white man is the warrior he pretends,” said the aged chief, “let him strike nigher to the mark.”

The scout laughed aloud — a noise that produced the startling effect of an unnatural sound on Heyward; then dropping the piece heavily into his extended left hand, it was discharged, apparently by the shock, driving the fragments of the vessel into the air, and scattering them on every side. Almost at the same instant, the rattling sound of the rifle was heard, as he suffered it to fall, contemptuously, to the earth.

The first impression of so strange a scene was engrossing admiration. Then a low, but increasing murmur, ran through the multitude, and finally swelled into sounds that denoted a lively opposition in the sentiments of the spectators. While some openly testified their satisfaction at so unexampled dexterity, by far the larger portion of the tribe were inclined to believe the success of the shot was the result of accident. Heyward was not slow to confirm an opinion that was so favorable to his own pretensions.

“It was chance!” he exclaimed; “none can shoot without an aim!”

“Chance!” echoed the excited woodsman, who was now stubbornly bent on maintaining his identity at every hazard, and on whom the secret hints of Heyward to acquiesce in the deception were entirely lost. “Does yonder lying Huron, too, think it chance? Give him another gun, and place us face to face, without cover or dodge, and let Providence, and our own eyes, decide the matter atween us! I do not make the offer to you, major; for our blood is of a color, and we serve the same

master.”

“That the Huron is a liar, is very evident,” returned Heyward, coolly; “you have yourself heard him assert you to be La Longue Carabine.”

It were impossible to say what violent assertion the stubborn Hawkeye would have next made, in his headlong wish to vindicate his identity, had not the aged Delaware once more interposed.

“The hawk which comes from the clouds can return when he will,” he said; “give them the guns.”

This time the scout seized the rifle with avidity; nor had Magua, though he watched the movement of the marksman with jealous eyes, any further cause for apprehension.

“Now let it be proved, in the face of this tribe of Delawares, which is the better man,” cried the scout, tapping the butt of his piece with that finger which had pulled so many fatal triggers. “You see the gourd hanging against yonder tree, major; if you are a marksman fit for the borders, let me see you break its shell!”

Duncan noted the object, and prepared himself to renew the trial. The gourd was one of the usual little vessels used by the Indians, and it was suspended from a dead branch of a small pine, by a thong of deer-skin, at the full distance of a hundred yards. So strangely compounded is the feeling of self-love, that the young soldier, while he knew the utter worthlessness of the suffrages of his savage umpires, forgot the sudden motives of the contest in a wish to excel. It has been seen, already, that his skill was far from being contemptible, and he now resolved to put forth its nicest qualities. Had his life depended on the issue, the aim of Duncan could not have been more deliberate or guarded. He fired; and three or four young Indians, who sprang forward at the report, announced with a shout, that the ball was in the tree, a very little on one side of the proper object. The warriors uttered a common ejaculation of pleasure, and then turned their eyes inquiringly on the movements of his rival.

“It may do for the Royal Americans!” said Hawkeye, laughing once more in his own silent, heartfelt manner; “but had my gun often turned so much from the true line, many a marten, whose skin is now in a lady’s muff, would still be in the woods; ay, and many a bloody Mingo, who has departed to his final account, would be acting his deviltries at this very day, atween the provinces. I hope the squaw who owns the gourd has more of them in her wigwam, for this will never hold water again!”

The scout had shook his priming, and cocked his piece, while speaking; and, as he ended, he threw back a foot, and slowly raised the muzzle from the earth: the motion was steady, uniform, and in one direction. When on a perfect level, it remained for a single moment, without tremor or variation, as though both man and rifle were carved in stone. During that stationary instant, it poured forth its contents, in a bright, glancing sheet of flame. Again the young Indians bounded forward; but their hurried search and disappointed looks announced that no traces of the bullet were to be seen.

“Go!” said the old chief to the scout, in a tone of strong disgust; “thou art a wolf in the skin of a dog. I will talk to the ‘Long Rifle’ of the Yengeese.”

“Ah! had I that piece which furnished the name you use, I would oblige myself to cut the thong, and drop the gourd without breaking it!” returned Hawkeye, perfectly undisturbed by the other’s manner, “Fools, if you would find the bullet of a sharpshooter of these woods, you must look in the object and not around it!”

The Indian youths instantly comprehended his meaning — for this time he spoke in the Delaware tongue — and tearing the gourd from the tree, they held it on high with an exulting shout, displaying a hole in its bottom, which had been cut by the bullet, after passing through the usual orifice in the centre of its upper side. At this unexpected exhibition, a loud and vehement expression of pleasure burst from the mouth of every warrior present. It decided the question, and effectually established Hawkeye in the possession of his dangerous reputation. Those curious and admiring eyes which had been turned again on Heyward, were finally directed to the weather-beaten form of the scout, who immediately became the principal object of attention to the simple and unsophisticated beings by whom he was surrounded. When the sudden and noisy commotion had a little subsided, the aged chief resumed his examination.

“Why did you wish to stop my ears?” he said, addressing Duncan; “are the Delawares fools, that they could not know the young panther from the cat?”

“They will yet find the Huron a singing-bird,” said Duncan, endeavoring to adopt the figurative language of the natives.

“It is good. We will know who can shut the ears of men. Brother,” added the chief, turning his eyes on Magua, “the



Delawares listen.”

Thus singled, and directly called on to declare his object, the Huron arose; and advancing with great deliberation and dignity into the very centre of the circle, where he stood confronted to the prisoners, he placed himself in an attitude to speak. Before opening his mouth, however, he bent his eyes slowly along the whole living boundary of earnest faces as if to temper his expressions to the capacities of his audience. On Hawkeye he cast a glance of respectful enmity; on Duncan, a look of inextinguishable hatred; the shrinking figure of Alice he scarcely deigned to notice; but when his glance met the firm, commanding, and yet lovely form of Cora, his eye lingered a moment, with an expression that it might have been difficult to define. Then, filled with his own dark intentions, he spoke in the language of the Canadas, a tongue that he well knew was comprehended by most of his auditors.

“The Spirit that made men colored them differently,” commenced the subtle Huron. “Some are blacker than the sluggish bear. These He said would be slaves; and He ordered them to work forever, like the beaver. You may hear them groan, when the south wind blows, louder than the lowing buffaloes, along the shores of the great salt lake, where the big canoes come and go with them in droves. Some He made with faces paler than the ermine of the forests: and these He ordered to be traders; dogs to their women, and wolves to their slaves. He gave this people the nature of the pigeon: wings that never tire; young, more plentiful than the leaves on the trees, and appetites to devour the earth. He gave them tongues like the false call of the wild-cat; hearts like rabbits; the cunning of the hog (but none of the fox), and arms longer than the legs of the moose. With his tongue, he stops the ears of the Indians; his heart teaches him to pay warriors to fight his battles; his cunning tells him how to get together the goods of the earth; and his arms inclose the land from the shores of the salt-water to the islands of the great lake. His gluttony makes him sick. God gave him enough, and yet he wants all. Such are the pale-faces.

“Some the Great Spirit made with skins brighter and redder than yonder sun,” continued Magua, pointing impressively upwards to the lurid luminary, which was struggling through the misty atmosphere of the horizon; “and these did He fashion to His own mind. He gave them this island as He had made it, covered with trees, and filled with game. The wind made their clearings; the sun and rains ripened their fruits; and the snows came to tell them to be thankful. What need had they of roads to journey by! They saw through the hills. When the beavers worked, they lay in the shade, and looked on. The winds cooled them in summer; in winter, skins kept them warm. If they fought among themselves, it was to prove that they were men. They were brave; they were just; they were happy.”

Here the speaker paused, and again looked around him, to discover if his legend had touched the sympathies of his listeners. He met everywhere with eyes riveted on his own, heads erect, and nostrils expanded, as if each individual present felt himself able and willing, singly, to redress the wrongs of his race.

“If the Great Spirit gave different tongues to his red children,” he continued, in a low, still, melancholy voice, “it was that all animals might understand them. Some He placed among the snows, with their cousin the bear. Some he placed near the setting sun, on the road to the happy hunting-grounds. Some on the lands around the great fresh waters; but to his greatest, and most beloved, He gave the sands of the salt lake. Do my brothers know the name of this favored people?”

“It was the Lenape!” exclaimed twenty eager voices, in a breath.

“It was the Lenni Lenape,” returned Magua, affecting to bend his head in reverence to their former greatness. “It was the tribes of the Lenape! The sun rose from water that was salt, and set in water that was sweet, and never hid himself from their eyes. But why should I, a Huron of the woods, tell a wise people their own traditions? Why remind them of their injuries; their ancient greatness; their deeds; their glory; their happiness — their losses; their defeats; their misery? Is there not one among them who has seen it all, and who knows it to be true? I have done. My tongue is still, for my heart is of lead. I listen.”

As the voice of the speaker suddenly ceased, every face and all eyes turned, by a common movement, towards the venerable Tamenund. From the moment that he took his seat, until the present instant, the lips of the patriarch had not severed, and scarcely a sign of life had escaped him. He sat bent in feebleness, and apparently unconscious of the presence he was in, during the whole of that opening scene, in which the skill of the scout had been so clearly established. At the nicely graduated sound of Magua’s voice, however, he betrayed some evidence of consciousness, and once or twice he even raised his head, as if to listen. But when the crafty Huron spoke of his nation by name, the eyelids of the old man raised themselves, and he looked out upon the multitude with that sort of dull unmeaning expression which might be supposed to

belong to the countenance of a spectre. Then he made an effort to rise, and being upheld by his supporters, he gained his feet, in a posture commanding by its dignity, while he tottered with weakness.

"Who calls upon the children of the Lenape!" he said, in a deep, guttural voice, that was rendered awfully audible by the breathless silence of the multitude: "who speaks of things gone! Does not the egg become a worm — the worm a fly, and perish? Why tell the Delawares of good that is past? Better thank the Manitou for that which remains."

"It is a Wyandot," said Magua, stepping nigher to the rude platform on which the other stood; "a friend of Tamenund."

"A friend!" repeated the sage, on whose brow a dark frown settled, imparting a portion of that severity which had rendered his eye so terrible in middle age. "Are the Mingos rulers of the earth? What brings a Huron here?"

"Justice. His prisoners are with his brothers, and he comes for his own."

Tamenund turned his head towards one of his supporters, and listened to the short explanation the man gave. Then facing the applicant, he regarded him a moment with deep attention; after which he said, in a low and reluctant voice —

"Justice is the law of the great Manitou. My children, give the stranger food. Then, Huron, take thine own and depart."

On the delivery of this solemn judgment, the patriarch seated himself, and closed his eyes again, as if better pleased with the images of his own ripened experience than with the visible objects of the world. Against such a decree there was no Delaware sufficiently hardy to murmur, much less oppose himself. The words were barely uttered when four or five of the younger warriors, stepping behind Heyward and the scout, passed thongs so dexterously and rapidly around their arms, as to hold them both in instant bondage. The former was too much engrossed with his precious and nearly insensible burden, to be aware of their intentions before they were executed; and the latter, who considered even the hostile tribes of the Delawares a superior race of beings, submitted without resistance. Perhaps, however, the manner of the scout would not have been so passive, had he fully comprehended the language in which the preceding dialogue had been conducted.

Magua cast a look of triumph around the whole assembly before he proceeded to the execution of his purpose. Perceiving that the men were unable to offer any resistance, he turned his looks on her he valued most. Cora met his gaze with an eye so calm and firm, that his resolution wavered. Then recollecting his former artifice, he raised Alice from the arms of the warrior against whom she leaned, and beckoning Heyward to follow, he motioned for the encircling crowd to open. But Cora, instead of obeying the impulse he had expected, rushed to the feet of the patriarch, and raising her voice, exclaimed aloud —

"Just and venerable Delaware, on thy wisdom and power we lean for mercy! Be deaf to yonder artful and remorseless monster, who poisons thy ears with falsehoods to feed his thirst for blood. Thou that hast lived long, and that hast seen the evil of the world, should know how to temper its calamities to the miserable."

The eyes of the old man opened heavily, and he once more looked upwards at the multitude. As the piercing tones of the supplicant swelled on his ears, they moved slowly in the direction of her person, and finally settled there in a steady gaze. Cora had cast herself to her knees; and, with hands clenched in each other and pressed upon her bosom, she remained like a beauteous and breathing model of her sex, looking up in his faded, but majestic countenance, with a species of holy reverence. Gradually the expression of Tamenund's features changed, and losing their vacancy in admiration, they lighted with a portion of that intelligence which a century before had been wont to communicate his youthful fire to the extensive bands of the Delawares. Rising without assistance, and seemingly without an effort, he demanded, in a voice that startled its auditors by its firmness —

"What art thou?"

"A woman. One of a hated race, if thou wilt — a Yengee. But one who has never harmed thee, and who cannot harm thy people, if she would; who asks for succor."

"Tell me, my children," continued the patriarch, hoarsely, motioning to those around him, though his eyes still dwelt upon the kneeling form of Cora, "where have the Delawares camped?"

"In the mountains of the Iroquois, beyond the clear springs of the Horican."

"Many parching summers are come and gone," continued the sage, "since I drank of the water of my own rivers. The children of Minquon<sup>26</sup> are the justest white men; but they were thirsty, and they took it to themselves. Do they follow us so far?"

<sup>26</sup> William Penn was termed Minquon by the Delawares, and, as he never used violence or injustice in his dealings with them, his reputation for probity passed into a proverb. The American is justly proud of the origin of his nation, which is perhaps unequalled in the history of the world; but the

Pennsylvanian and Jerseyman have more reason to value themselves in their ancestors than the natives of any other State, since no wrong was done the original owners of the soil.

"We follow none; we covet nothing," answered Cora. "Captives against our wills, have we been brought among you; and we ask but permission to depart to our own in peace. Art thou not Tamenund — the father, the judge, I had almost said, the prophet — of this people?"

"I am Tamenund of many days."

"Tis now some seven years that one of thy people was at the mercy of a white chief on the borders of this province. He claimed to be of the blood of the good and just Tamenund. 'Go,' said the white man, 'for thy parent's sake thou art free.' Dost thou remember the name of that English warrior?"

"I remember, that when a laughing boy," returned the patriarch, with the peculiar recollection of vast age, "I stood upon the sands of the sea-shore, and saw a big canoe, with wings whiter than the swan's, and wider than many eagles, come from the rising sun."

"Nay, nay; I speak not of a time so very distant, but of favor shown to thy kindred by one of mine, within the memory of thy youngest warrior."

"Was it when the Yengeese and the Dutchmanne fought for the hunting-grounds of the Delawares? Then Tamenund was a chief, and first laid aside the bow for the lightning of the pale faces —"

"Nor yet then," interrupted Cora, "by many ages; I speak of a thing of yesterday. Surely, surely, you forget it not."

"It was but yesterday," rejoined the aged man, with touching pathos, "that the children of the Lenape were masters of the world. The fishes of the salt lake, the birds, the beasts, and the Mengwe of the woods, owned them for sagamores."

Cora bowed her head in disappointment, and, for a bitter moment, struggled with her chagrin. Then elevating her rich features and beaming eyes, she continued, in tones scarcely less penetrating than the unearthly voice of the patriarch himself —

"Tell me, is Tamenund a father?"

The old man looked down upon her from his elevated stand, with a benignant smile on his wasted countenance, and then casting his eyes slowly over the whole assemblage, he answered — "Of a nation."

"For myself I ask nothing. Like thee and thine, venerable chief," she continued, pressing her hands convulsively on her heart, and suffering her head to droop until her burning cheeks were nearly concealed in the maze of dark glossy tresses that fell in disorder upon her shoulders, "the curse of my ancestors has fallen heavily on their child. But yonder is one who has never known the weight of Heaven's displeasure until now. She is the daughter of an old and failing man, whose days are near their close. She has many, very many, to love her, and delight in her; and she is too good, much too precious, to become the victim of that villain."

"I know that the pale-faces are a proud and hungry race. I know that they claim not only to have the earth, but that the meanest of their color is better than the sachems of the redman. The dogs and crows of their tribes," continued the earnest old chieftain, without heeding the wounded spirit of his listener, whose head was nearly crushed to the earth in shame, as he proceeded, "would bark and caw before they would take a woman to their wigwams whose blood was not of the color of snow. But let them not boast before the face of the Manitou too loud. They entered the land at the rising, and may yet go off at the setting sun. I have often seen the locusts strip the leaves from the trees, but the season of blossoms has always come again."

"It is so," said Cora, drawing a long breath, as if reviving from a trance, raising her face, and shaking back her shining veil, with a kindling eye, that contradicted the death-like paleness of her countenance; "but why — it is not permitted us to inquire. There is yet one of thine own people who has not been brought before thee; before thou lettest the Huron depart in triumph, hear him speak."

Observing Tamenund to look about him doubtingly, one of his companions said — "It is a snake — a redskin in the pay of the Yengeese. We keep him for the torture."

"Let him come," returned the sage. Then Tamenund once more sank into his seat, and a silence so deep prevailed, while the young men prepared to obey his simple mandate, that the leaves, which fluttered in the draught of the light morning air, were distinctly heard rustling in the surrounding forest.

## CHAPTER 30

*"If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice:  
I stand for judgment; answer, shall I have it?"*

—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

The silence continued unbroken by human sounds for many anxious minutes. Then the waving multitude opened and shut again, and Uncas stood in the living circle. All those eyes, which had been curiously studying the lineaments of the sage, as the source of their own intelligence, turned on the instant, and were now bent in secret admiration on the erect, agile, and faultless person of the captive. But neither the presence in which he found himself, nor the exclusive attention that he attracted, in any manner disturbed the self-possession of the young Mohican. He cast a deliberate and observing look on every side of him, meeting the settled expression of hostility that lowered in the visages of the chiefs, with the same calmness as the curious gaze of the attentive children. But when, last in his haughty scrutiny, the person of Tamenund came under his glance, his eye became fixed, as though all other objects were already forgotten. Then advancing with a slow and noiseless step up the area, he placed himself immediately before the footstool of the sage. Here he stood unnoted, though keenly observant himself, until one of the chiefs apprised the latter of his presence.

"With what tongue does the prisoner speak to the Manitou?" demanded the patriarch, without unclosing his eyes.

"Like his fathers," Uncas replied; "with the tongue of a Delaware."

At this sudden and unexpected annunciation, a low, fierce yell ran through the multitude, that might not inaptly be compared to the growl of the lion, as his choler is first awakened — a fearful omen of the weight of his future anger. The effect was equally strong on the sage, though differently exhibited. He passed a hand before his eyes, as if to exclude the least evidence of so shameful a spectacle, while he repeated, in his low, guttural tones, the words he had just heard.

"A Delaware! I have lived to see the tribes of the Lenape driven from their council-fires, and scattered, like broken herds of deer, among the hills of the Iroquois! I have seen the hatchets of a strange people sweep woods from the valleys, that the winds of heaven had spared! The beasts that run on the mountains, and the birds that fly above the trees, have I seen living in the wigwams of men; but never before have I found a Delaware so base as to creep, like a poisonous serpent, into the camps of his nation."

"The singing-birds have opened their bills," returned Uncas, in the softest notes of his own musical voice; "and Tamenund has heard their song."

The sage started, and bent his head aside, as if to catch the fleeting sounds of some passing melody.

"Does Tamenund dream!" he exclaimed. "What voice is at his ear! Have the winters gone backward! Will summer come again to the children of the Lenape!"

A solemn and respectful silence succeeded this incoherent burst from the lips of the Delaware prophet. His people steadily construed his unintelligible language into one of those mysterious conferences he was believed to hold so frequently with a superior intelligence, and they awaited the issue of the revelation in awe. After a patient pause, however, one of the aged men, perceiving that the sage had lost the recollection of the subject before them, ventured to remind him again of the presence of the prisoner.

"The false Delaware trembles lest he should hear the words of Tamenund," he said. "'Tis a hound that howls, when the Yengeese show him a trail."

"And ye," returned Uncas, looking sternly around him, "are dogs that whine, when the Frenchman casts ye the offals of his deer!"

Twenty knives gleamed in the air, and as many warriors sprang to their feet, at this biting, and perhaps merited retort; but a motion from one of the chiefs suppressed the outbreking of their tempers, and restored the appearance of quiet. The task might probably have been more difficult, had not a movement made by Tamenund indicated that he was again about to speak.

"Delaware!" resumed the sage, "little art thou worthy of thy name. My people have not seen a bright sun in many winters; and the warrior who deserts his tribe when hid in clouds is doubly a traitor. The law of the Manitou is just. It is so;

while the rivers run and the mountains stand, while the blossoms come and go on the trees, it must be so. He is thine, my children; deal justly by him."

Not a limb was moved, nor was a breath drawn louder and longer than common, until the closing syllable of this final decree had passed the lips of Tamenund. Then a cry of vengeance burst at once, as it might be, from the united lips of the nation; a frightful augury of their ruthless intentions. In the midst of these prolonged and savage yells, a chief proclaimed, in a high voice, that the captive was condemned to endure the dreadful trial of torture by fire. The circle broke its order, and screams of delight mingled with the bustle and tumult of preparation. Heyward struggled madly with his captors; the anxious eyes of Hawkeye began to look around him, with an expression of peculiar earnestness; and Cora again threw herself at the feet of the patriarch, once more a suppliant for mercy.

Throughout the whole of these trying moments, Uncas had alone preserved his serenity. He looked on the preparations with a steady eye, and when the tormentors came to seize him, he met them with a firm and upright attitude. One among them, if possible, more fierce and savage than his fellows, seized the hunting-shirt of the young warrior, and at a single effort tore it from his body. Then, with a yell of frantic pleasure, he leaped towards his unresisting victim, and prepared to lead him to the stake. But, at that moment, when he appeared most a stranger to the feelings of humanity, the purpose of the savage was arrested as suddenly as if a supernatural agency had interposed in the behalf of Uncas. The eyeballs of the Delaware seemed to start from their sockets; his mouth opened, and his whole form became frozen in an attitude of amazement. Raising his hand with a slow and regulated motion, he pointed with a finger to the bosom of the captive. His companions crowded about him in wonder, and every eye was, like his own, fastened intently on the figure of a small tortoise, beautifully tattooed on the breast of the prisoner, in a bright blue tint.

For a single instant Uncas enjoyed his triumph, smiling calmly on the scene. Then motioning the crowd away with a high and haughty sweep of his arm, he advanced in front of the nation with the air of a king, and spoke in a voice louder than the murmur of admiration that ran through the multitude.

"Men of the Lenni Lenape!" he said, "my race upholds the earth! Your feeble tribe stands on my shell!<sup>27</sup> What fire that a Delaware can light would burn the child of my fathers," he added, pointing proudly to the simple blazonry on his skin; "the blood that came from such a stock would smother your flames! My race is the grandfather of nations!"

<sup>27</sup> Turtle.

"Who art thou?" demanded Tamenund, rising at the startling tones he heard, more than at any meaning conveyed by the language of the prisoner.

"Uncas, the son of Chingachgook," answered the captive modestly, turning from the nation, and bending his head in reverence to the other's character and years; "a son of the great Unamis."

"The hour of Tamenund is nigh!" exclaimed the sage; "the day is come, at last, to the night! I thank the Manitou, that one is here to fill my place at the council-fire. Uncas, the child of Uncas, is found! Let the eyes of a dying eagle gaze on the rising sun."

The youth stepped lightly, but proudly, on the platform, where he became visible to the whole agitated and wondering multitude. Tamenund held him long at the length of his arm, and read every turn in the fine lineaments of his countenance, with the untiring gaze of one who recalled days of happiness.

"Is Tamenund a boy?" at length the bewildered prophet exclaimed. "Have I dreamt of so many snows — that my people were scattered like floating sands — of Yengeese, more plenty than the leaves on the trees! The arrow of Tamenund would not frighten the fawn; his arm is withered like the branch of a dead oak; the snail would be swifter in the race; yet is Uncas before him as they went to battle against the pale-faces! Uncas, the panther of his tribe, the eldest son of the Lenape, the wisest Sagamore of the Mohicans! Tell me, ye Delawares, has Tamenund been a sleeper for a hundred winters?"

The calm and deep silence which succeeded these words, sufficiently announced the awful reverence with which his people received the communication of the patriarch. None dared to answer, though all listened in breathless expectation of what might follow. Uncas, however, looking in his face with the fondness and veneration of a favored child, presumed on his own high and acknowledged rank, to reply.

"Four warriors of his race have lived, and died," he said, "since the friend of Tamenund led his people in battle. The blood of the turtle has been in many chiefs, but all have gone back into the earth from whence they came except Chingachgook and his son."

"It is true — it is true," returned the sage; a flash of recollection destroying all his pleasing fancies, and restoring him at once to a consciousness of the true history of his nation. "Our wise men have often said that two warriors of the unchanged race were in the hills of the Yengeese; why have their seats at the council-fires of the Delawares been so long empty?"

At these words the young man raised his head, which he had still kept bowed a little, in reverence; and lifting his voice so as to be heard by the multitude, as if to explain at once and forever the policy of his family, he said aloud —

"Once we slept where we could hear the salt lake speak in its anger. Then we were rulers and sagamores over the land. But when a pale-face was seen on every brook, we followed the deer back to the river of our nation. The Delawares were gone. Few warriors of them all stayed to drink of the stream they loved. Then said my fathers, 'Here will we hunt. The waters of the river go into the salt lake. If we go towards the setting sun, we shall find streams that run into the great lakes of sweet water; there would a Mohican die, like fishes of the sea, in the clear springs. When the Manitou is ready, and shall say "Come," we will follow the river to the sea, and take our own again.' Such, Delawares, is the belief of the children of the Turtle. Our eyes are on the rising, and not towards the setting sun. We know whence he comes, but we know not whither he goes. It is enough."

The men of the Lenape listened to his words with all the respect that superstition could lend, finding a secret charm even in the figurative language with which the young Sagamore imparted his ideas. Uncas himself watched the effect of his brief explanation with intelligent eyes, and gradually dropped the air of authority he had assumed, as he perceived that his auditors were content. Then permitting his looks to wander over the silent throng that crowded around the elevated seat of Tamenund, he first perceived Hawkeye in his bonds. Stepping eagerly from his stand, he made way for himself to the side of his friend; and cutting his thongs with a quick and angry stroke of his own knife, he motioned to the crowd to divide. The Indians silently obeyed, and once more they stood ranged in their circle, as before his appearance among them. Uncas took the scout by the hand, and led him to the feet of the patriarch.

"Father," he said, "look at this pale-face; a just man, and the friend of the Delawares."

"Is he a son of Minquon?"

"Not so; a warrior known to the Yengeese, and feared by the Maquas."

"What name has he gained by his deeds?"

"We call him Hawkeye," Uncas replied, using the Delaware phrase; "for his sight never fails. The Mingos know him better by the death he gives their warriors; with them he is 'The Long Rifle.'"

"La Longue Carabine!" exclaimed Tamenund, opening his eyes, and regarding the scout sternly. "My son has not done well to call him friend."

"I call him so who proves himself such," returned the young chief, with great calmness, but with a steady mien. "If Uncas is welcome among the Delawares, then is Hawkeye with his friends."

"The pale-face has slain my young men; his name is great for the blows he has struck the Lenape."

"If a Mingo has whispered that much in the ear of the Delaware, he has only shown that he is a singing-bird," said the scout, who now believed that it was time to vindicate himself from such offensive charges, and who spoke in the tongue of the man he addressed, modifying his Indian figures, however, with his own peculiar notions. "That I have slain the Maquas I am not the man to deny, even at their own council-fires; but that, knowingly, my hand has ever harmed a Delaware, is opposed to the reason of my gifts, which is friendly to them, and all that belongs to their nation."

A low exclamation of applause passed among the warriors, who exchanged looks with each other like men that first began to perceive their error.

"Where is the Huron?" demanded Tamenund. "Has he stopped my ears?"

Magua, whose feelings during that scene in which Uncas had triumphed may be much better imagined than described, answered to the call by stepping boldly in front of the patriarch.

"The just Tamenund," he said, "will not keep what a Huron has lent."

"Tell me, son of my brother," returned the sage, avoiding the dark countenance of Le Subtil, and turning gladly to the more ingenuous features of Uncas, "has the stranger a conqueror's right over you?"

"He has none. The panther may get into snares set by the women; but he is strong, and knows how to leap through them."

“La Longue Carabine?”

“Laughs at the Mingo. Go, Huron, ask your squaws the color of a bear.”

“The stranger and the white maiden that came into my camp together?”

“Should journey on an open path.”

“And the woman that Huron left with my warriors?”

Uncas made no reply.

“And the woman that the Mingo has brought into my camp,” repeated Tamenund, gravely.

“She is mine,” cried Magua, shaking his hand in triumph at Uncas. “Mohican, you know that she is mine.”

“My son is silent,” said Tamenund, endeavoring to read the expression of the face that the youth turned from him in sorrow.

“It is so,” was the low answer.

A short and impressive pause succeeded, during which it was very apparent with what reluctance the multitude admitted the justice of the Mingo’s claim. At length the sage, in whom alone the decision depended, said, in a firm voice —

“Huron, depart.”

“As he came, just Tamenund,” demanded the wily Magua; “or with hands filled with the faith of the Delawares? The wigwam of Le Renard Subtil is empty. Make him strong with his own.”

The aged man mused with himself for a time; and then bending his head towards one of his venerable companions, he asked —

“Are my ears open?”

“It is true.”

“Is this Mingo a chief?”

“The first in his nation.”

“Girl, what wouldst thou? A great warrior takes thee to wife. Go! thy race will not end.”

“Better, a thousand times, it should,” exclaimed the horror-struck Cora, “than meet with such a degradation!”

“Huron, her mind is in the tents of her fathers. An unwilling maiden makes an unhappy wigwam.”

“She speaks with the tongue of her people,” returned Magua, regarding his victim with a look of bitter irony. “She is of a race of traders, and will bargain for a bright look. Let Tamenund speak the words.”

“Take you the wampum, and our love.”

“Nothing hence but what Magua brought hither.”

“Then depart with thine own. The great Manitou forbids that a Delaware should be unjust.”

Magua advanced, and seized his captive strongly by the arm; the Delawares fell back, in silence; and Cora, as if conscious that remonstrance would be useless, prepared to submit to her fate without resistance.

“Hold, hold!” cried Duncan, springing forward; “Huron, have mercy! her ransom shall make thee richer than any of thy people were ever yet known to be.”

“Magua is a redskin; he wants not the beads of the pale-faces.”

“Gold, silver, powder, lead — all that a warrior needs shall be in thy wigwam; all that becomes the greatest chief.”

“Le Subtil is very strong,” cried Magua, violently shaking the hand which grasped the unresisting arm of Cora; “he has his revenge!”

“Mighty ruler of providence!” exclaimed Heyward, clasping his hands together in agony, “can this be suffered! To you, just Tamenund, I appeal for mercy.”

“The words of the Delaware are said,” returned the sage, closing his eyes, and dropping back into his seat, alike wearied with his mental and his bodily exertion. “Men speak not twice.”

“That a chief should not misspend his time in unsaying what had once been spoken, is wise and reasonable,” said Hawkeye, motioning to Duncan to be silent; “but it is also prudent in every warrior to consider well before he strikes his tomahawk into the head of his prisoner. Huron, I love you not; nor can I say that any Mingo has ever received much favor

at my hands. It is fair to conclude that, if this war does not soon end, many more of your warriors will meet me in the woods. Put it to your judgment, then, whether you would prefer taking such a prisoner as that into your encampment, or one like myself, who am a man that it would greatly rejoice your nation to see with naked hands."

"Will 'The Long Rifle' give his life for the woman?" demanded Magua, hesitatingly; for he had already made a motion towards quitting the place with his victim.

"No, no; I have not said so much as that," returned Hawkeye, drawing back with suitable discretion, when he noted the eagerness with which Magua listened to his proposal. "It would be an unequal exchange, to give a warrior, in the prime of his age and usefulness, for the best woman on the frontiers. I might consent to go into winter-quarters, now — at least six weeks afore the leaves will turn — on condition you will release the maiden."

Magua shook his head, and made an impatient sign for the crowd to open.

"Well, then," added the scout, with the musing air of a man who had not half made up his mind, "I will throw 'Killdeer' into the bargain. Take the word of an experienced hunter, the piece has not its equal atween the provinces."

Magua still disdained to reply, continuing his efforts to disperse the crowd.

"Perhaps," added the scout, losing his dissembled coolness, exactly in proportion as the other manifested an indifference to the exchange, "if I should condition to teach your young men the real virtue of the we'pon, it would smooth the little differences in our judgments."

Le Renard fiercely ordered the Delawares, who still lingered in an impenetrable belt around him, in hopes he would listen to the amicable proposal, to open his path, threatening, by the glance of his eye, another appeal to the infallible justice of their "prophet."

"What is ordered must sooner or later arrive," continued Hawkeye, turning with a sad and humbled look to Uncas. "The varlet knows his advantage, and will keep it! God bless you, boy; you have found friends among your natural kin and I hope they will prove as true as some you have met who had no Indian cross. As for me, sooner or later, I must die; it is therefore fortunate there are but few to make my death-howl. After all, it is likely the imps would have managed to master my scalp, so a day or two will make no great difference in the everlasting reckoning of time. God bless you," added the rugged woodsman, bending his head aside, and then instantly changing its direction again, with a wistful look towards the youth; "I loved both you and your father, Uncas, though our skins are not altogether of a color, and our gifts are somewhat different. Tell the Sagamore I never lost sight of him in my greatest trouble; and, as for you, think of me sometimes when on a lucky trail; and depend on it, boy, whether there be one heaven or two, there is a path in the other world by which honest men may come together again. You'll find the rifle in the place we hid it; take it, and keep it for my sake; and harkee, lad, as your natural gifts don't deny you the use of vengeance, use it a little freely on the Mingos; it may unburden grief at my loss, and ease your mind. Huron, I accept your offer; release the woman. I am your prisoner!"

A suppressed, but still distinct murmur of approbation, ran through the crowd at this generous proposition; even the fiercest among the Delaware warriors manifesting pleasure at the manliness of the intended sacrifice. Magua paused, and for an anxious moment, it might be said, he doubted; then casting his eyes on Cora, with an expression in which ferocity and admiration were strangely mingled, his purpose became fixed forever.

He intimated his contempt of the offer with a backward motion of his head, and said, in a steady and settled voice —

"Le Renard Subtil is a great chief; he has but one mind. Come," he added, laying his hand too familiarly on the shoulder of his captive to urge her onward; "a Huron is no tattler; we will go."

The maiden drew back in lofty womanly reserve, and her dark eye kindled, while the rich blood shot, like the passing brightness of the sun, into her very temples, at the indignity.

"I am your prisoner, and at a fitting time shall be ready to follow, even to my death. But violence is unnecessary," she coldly said; and immediately turning to Hawkeye, added, "Generous hunter! from my soul I thank you. Your offer is in vain, neither could it be accepted; but still you may serve me, even more than in your own noble intention. Look at that drooping, humbled child! Abandon her not until you leave her in the habitation of civilized men. I will not say," wringing the hard hand of the scout, "that her father will reward you — for such as you are above the rewards of men — but he will thank you, and bless you. And, believe me, the blessing of a just and aged man has virtue in the sight of Heaven. Would to God, I could hear one from his lips at this awful moment!" Her voice became choked, and, for an instant, she was silent; then advancing a step nigher to Duncan, who was supporting her unconscious sister, she continued, in more subdued



tones, but in which feeling and the habits of her sex maintained a fearful struggle — “I need not tell you to cherish the treasure you will possess. You love her, Heyward; that would conceal a thousand faults, though she had them. She is kind, gentle, sweet, good, as mortal may be. There is not a blemish in mind or person at which the proudest of you all would sicken. She is fair — O! how surpassingly fair!” laying her own beautiful, but less brilliant hand, in melancholy affection on the alabaster forehead of Alice, and parting the golden hair which clustered about her brows; “and yet her soul is pure and spotless as her skin! I could say much — more, perhaps, than cooler reason would approve; but I will spare you and myself” — Her voice became inaudible, and her face was bent over the form of her sister. After a long and burning kiss, she arose, and with features of the hue of death, but without even a tear in her feverish eye, she turned away, and added, to the savage, with all her former elevation of manner — “Now, sir, if it be your pleasure, I will follow.”

“Ay, go,” cried Duncan, placing Alice in the arms of an Indian girl; “go, Magua, go. These Delawares have their laws, which forbid them to detain you; but I — I have no such obligation. Go, malignant monster — why do you delay?”

It would be difficult to describe the expression with which Magua listened to this threat to follow. There was at first a fierce and manifest display of joy, and then it was instantly subdued in a look of cunning coldness.

“The woods are open,” he was content with answering. “‘The Open Hand’ can come.”

“Hold,” cried Hawkeye, seizing Duncan by the arm, and detaining him by violence; “you know not the craft of the imp. He would lead you to an ambushment, and your death —”

“Huron,” interrupted Uncas, who, submissive to the stern customs of his people, had been an attentive and grave listener to all that passed; “Huron, the justice of the Delawares comes from the Manitou. Look at the sun. He is now in the upper branches of the hemlock. Your path is short and open. When he is seen above the trees, there will be men on your trail.”

“I hear a crow!” exclaimed Magua, with a taunting laugh. “Go!” he added, shaking his hand at the crowd, which had slowly opened to admit his passage — “Where are the petticoats of the Delawares! Let them send their arrows and their guns to the Wyandots; they shall have venison to eat, and corn to hoe. Dogs, rabbits, thieves — I spit on you!”

His parting gibes were listened to in a dead, boding silence, and, with these biting words in his mouth, the triumphant Magua passed unmolested into the forest, followed by his passive captive, and protected by the inviolable laws of Indian hospitality.



## CHAPTER 31

*"FLUE.— Kill the poys and the luggage! 'Tis expressly against the law of arms; 'tis as arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offered in the world."*

—KING HENRY V.

So long as their enemy and his victim continued in sight, the multitude remained motionless as beings charmed to the place by some power that was friendly to the Huron; but the instant he disappeared, it became tossed and agitated by fierce and powerful passion. Uncas maintained his elevated stand, keeping his eyes on the form of Cora, until the colors of her dress were blended with the foliage of the forest; when he descended, and moving silently through the throng, he disappeared in that lodge from which he had so recently issued. A few of the graver and more attentive warriors, who caught the gleams of anger that shot from the eyes of the young chief in passing, followed him to the place he had selected for his meditations. After which, Tamenund and Alice were removed, and the women and children were ordered to disperse. During the momentous hour that succeeded, the encampment resembled a hive of troubled bees, who only awaited the appearance and example of their leader to take some distant and momentous flight.

A young warrior at length issued from the lodge of Uncas; and moving deliberately, with a sort of grave march, towards a dwarf pine that grew in the crevices of the rocky terrace, he tore the bark from its body, and then returned whence he came without speaking. He was soon followed by another, who stripped the sapling of its branches, leaving it a naked and blazed<sup>28</sup> trunk. A third colored the posts with stripes of a dark red paint; all which indications of a hostile design in the leaders of the nation were received by the men without in a gloomy and ominous silence. Finally, the Mohican himself reappeared, divested of all his attire except his girdle and leggings, and with one-half of his fine features hid under a cloud of threatening black.

<sup>28</sup> A tree which has been partially or entirely stripped of its bark is said, in the language of the country, to be "blazed." The term is strictly English; for a horse is said to be blazed when it has a white mark.

Uncas moved with a slow and dignified tread towards the post, which he immediately commenced encircling with a measured step, not unlike an ancient dance, raising his voice, at the same time, in the wild and irregular chant of his war-song. The notes were in the extremes of human sounds; being sometimes melancholy and exquisitely plaintive, even rivalling the melody of birds — and then, by sudden and startling transitions, causing the auditors to tremble by their depth and energy. The words were few and often repeated, proceeding gradually from a sort of invocation, or hymn to the Deity, to an intimation of the warrior's object, and terminating as they commenced with an acknowledgment of his own dependence on the Great Spirit. If it were possible to translate the comprehensive and melodious language in which he spoke, the ode might read something like the following:

"Manitou! Manitou! Manitou!  
Thou art great, thou art good, thou art wise:  
Manitou! Manitou!  
Thou art just.

"In the heavens, in the clouds, O, I see  
Many spots — many dark, many red:  
In the heavens, O, I see  
Many clouds.

"In the woods, in the air, O, I hear  
The whoop, the long yell, and the cry:  
In the woods, O, I hear  
The loud whoop!

"Manitou! Manitou! Manitou!  
Thou art weak — thou art strong; I am slow:

Manitou! Manitou!  
Give me aid."

At the end of what might be called each verse he made a pause, by raising a note louder and longer than common, that was peculiarly suited to the sentiment just expressed. The first close was solemn, and intended to convey the idea of veneration; the second descriptive, bordering on the alarming; and the third was the well known and terrific war-whoop, which burst from the lips of the young warrior, like a combination of all the frightful sounds of battle. The last was like the first, humble and imploring. Three times did he repeat this song, and as often did he encircle the post in his dance.

At the close of the first turn, a grave and highly esteemed chief of the Lenape followed his example, singing words of his own, however, to music of a similar character. Warrior after warrior enlisted in the dance, until all of any renown and authority were numbered in its mazes. The spectacle now became wildly terrific; the fierce-looking and menacing visages of the chiefs receiving additional power from the appalling strains in which they mingled their guttural tones. Just then Uncas struck his tomahawk deep into the post, and raised his voice in a shout, which might be termed his own battle-cry. The act announced that he had assumed the chief authority in the intended expedition.

It was a signal that awakened all the slumbering passions of a nation. A hundred youths, who had hitherto been restrained by the diffidence of their years, rushed in a frantic body on the fancied emblem of their enemy, and severed it asunder, splinter by splinter, until nothing remained of the trunk but its roots in the earth. During this moment of tumult, the most ruthless deeds of war were performed on the fragments of the tree, with as much apparent ferocity as if they were the living victims of their cruelty. Some were scalped; some received the keen and trembling axe; and others suffered by thrusts from the fatal knife. In short, the manifestations of zeal and fierce delight were so great and unequivocal, that the expedition was declared to be a war of the nation.

The instant Uncas had struck the blow, he moved out of the circle, and cast his eyes up to the sun, which was just gaining the point, when the truce with Magua was to end. The fact was soon announced by a significant gesture, accompanied by a corresponding cry; and the whole of the excited multitude abandoned their mimic warfare, with shrill yells of pleasure, to prepare for the more hazardous experiment of the reality.

The whole face of the encampment was instantly changed. The warriors, who were already armed and painted, became as still as if they were incapable of any uncommon burst of emotion. On the other hand, the women broke out of the lodges, with the songs of joy and those of lamentation, so strangely mingled, that it might have been difficult to have said which passion preponderated. None, however, were idle. Some bore their choicest articles, others their young, and some their aged and infirm, into the forest, which spread itself like a verdant carpet of bright green against the side of the mountain. Thither Tamenund also retired, with calm composure, after a short and touching interview with Uncas; from whom the sage separated with the reluctance that a parent would quit a long lost and just recovered child. In the meantime, Duncan saw Alice to a place of safety, and then sought the scout, with a countenance that denoted how eagerly he also panted for the approaching contest.

But Hawkeye was too much accustomed to the war-song and the enlistments of the natives, to betray any interest in the passing scene. He merely cast an occasional look at the number and quality of the warriors, who, from time to time, signified their readiness to accompany Uncas to the field. In this particular he was soon satisfied; for, as has been already seen, the power of the young chief quickly embraced every fighting man in the nation. After this material point was so satisfactorily decided, he despatched an Indian boy in quest of "Killdeer" and the rifle of Uncas, to the place where they had deposited the weapons on approaching the camp of the Delawares; a measure of double policy, inasmuch as it protected the arms from their own fate, if detained as prisoners, and gave them the advantage of appearing among the strangers rather as sufferers than as men provided with the means of defence and subsistence. In selecting another to perform the office of reclaiming his highly prized rifle, the scout had lost sight of none of his habitual caution. He knew that Magua had not come unattended, and he also knew that Huron spies watched the movements of their new enemies, along the whole boundary of the woods. It would, therefore, have been fatal to himself to have attempted the experiment; a warrior would have fared no better; but the danger of a boy would not be likely to commence until after his object was discovered. When Heyward joined him, the scout was coolly awaiting the result of this experiment.

The boy, who had been well instructed, and was sufficiently crafty, proceeded, with a bosom that was swelling with the pride of such a confidence, and all the hopes of young ambition, carelessly across the clearing to the wood, which he

entered at a point at some little distance from the place where the guns were secreted. The instant, however, he was concealed by the foliage of the bushes, his dusky form was to be seen gliding, like that of a serpent, towards the desired treasure. He was successful; and in another moment he appeared flying across the narrow opening that skirted the base of the terrace on which the village stood, with the velocity of an arrow, and bearing a prize in each hand. He had actually gained the crags, and was leaping up their sides with incredible activity, when a shot from the woods showed how accurate had been the judgment of the scout. The boy answered it with a feeble but contemptuous shout; and immediately a second bullet was sent after him from another part of the cover. At the next instant he appeared on the level above, elevating his guns in triumph, while he moved with the air of a conqueror towards the renowned hunter who had honored him by so glorious a commission.

Notwithstanding the lively interest Hawkeye had taken in the fate of his messenger, he received "Killdeer" with a satisfaction that, momentarily, drove all other recollections from his mind. After examining the piece with an intelligent eye, and opening and shutting the pan some ten or fifteen times, and trying sundry other equally important experiments on the lock, he turned to the boy, and demanded with great manifestations of kindness, if he was hurt. The urchin looked proudly up in his face, but made no reply.

"Ah! I see, lad, the knaves have barked your arm!" added the scout, taking up the limb of the patient sufferer, across which a deep flesh wound had been made by one of the bullets; "but a little bruised alder will act like a charm. In the meantime I will wrap it in a badge of wampum! You have commenced the business of a warrior early, my brave boy, and are likely to bear a plenty of honorable scars to your grave. I know many young men that have taken scalps who cannot show such a mark as this. Go!" having bound up the arm; "you will be a chief!"

The lad departed, prouder of his flowing blood than the vainest courtier could be of his blushing ribbon; and stalked among the fellows of his age, an object of general admiration and envy.

But in a moment of so many serious and important duties, this single act of juvenile fortitude did not attract the general notice and commendation it would have received under milder auspices. It had, however, served to apprise the Delawares of the position and the intentions of their enemies. Accordingly a party of adventurers, better suited to the task than the weak though spirited boy, was ordered to dislodge the skulkers. The duty was soon performed; for most of the Hurons retired of themselves when they found they had been discovered. The Delawares followed to a sufficient distance from their own encampment, and then halted for orders, apprehensive of being led into an ambush. As both parties secreted themselves, the woods were again as still and quiet as a mild summer morning and deep solitude could render them.

The calm but still impatient Uncas now collected his chiefs, and divided his power. He presented Hawkeye as a warrior, often tried, and always found deserving of confidence. When he found his friend met with a favorable reception, he bestowed on him the command of twenty men, like himself, active, skilful, and resolute. He gave the Delawares to understand the rank of Heyward among the troops of the Yengeese, and then tendered to him a trust of equal authority. But Duncan declined the charge, professing his readiness to serve as a volunteer by the side of the scout. After this disposition, the young Mohican appointed various native chiefs to fill the different situations of responsibility, and the time pressing, he gave forth the word to march. He was cheerfully, but silently, obeyed by more than two hundred men.

Their entrance into the forest was perfectly unmolested; nor did they encounter any living objects, that could either give the alarm, or furnish the intelligence they needed, until they came upon the lairs of their own scouts. Here a halt was ordered, and the chiefs were assembled to hold a "whispering council."

At this meeting divers plans of operation were suggested, though none of a character to meet the wishes of their ardent leader. Had Uncas followed the promptings of his own inclinations, he would have led his followers to the charge without a moment's delay, and put the conflict to the hazard of an instant issue; but such a course would have been in opposition to all the received practices and opinions of his countrymen. He was, therefore, fain to adopt a caution that in the present temper of his mind he execrated, and to listen to advice at which his fiery spirit chafed, under the vivid recollection of Cora's danger and Magua's insolence.

After an unsatisfactory conference of many minutes, a solitary individual was seen advancing from the side of the enemy, with such apparent haste, as to induce the belief he might be a messenger charged with pacific overtures. When within a hundred yards, however, of the cover behind which the Delaware council had assembled, the stranger hesitated,

appeared uncertain what course to take, and finally halted. All eyes were now turned on Uncas, as if seeking directions how to proceed.

"Hawkeye," said the young chief, in a low voice, "he must never speak to the Hurons again."

"His time has come," said the laconic scout, thrusting the long barrel of his rifle through the leaves, and taking his deliberate and fatal aim. But, instead of pulling the trigger he lowered the muzzle again, and indulged himself in a fit of his peculiar mirth. "I took the imp for a Mingo, as I'm a miserable sinner!" he said; "but when my eye ranged along his ribs for a place to get the bullet in — would you think it, Uncas — I saw the musicianer's blower; and so, after all, it is the man they call Gamut, whose death can profit no one, and whose life, if his tongue can do anything but sing, may be made serviceable to our own ends. If sounds have not lost their virtue, I'll soon have a discourse with the honest fellow, and that in a voice he'll find more agreeable than the speech of 'Killdeer.'"

So saying, Hawkeye laid aside his rifle; and crawling through the bushes until within hearing of David, he attempted to repeat the musical effort, which had conducted himself, with so much safety and *éclat*, through the Huron encampment. The exquisite organs of Gamut could not readily be deceived (and, to say the truth, it would have been difficult for any other than Hawkeye to produce a similar noise), and consequently, having once before heard the sounds, he now knew whence they proceeded. The poor fellow appeared relieved from a state of great embarrassment; for pursuing the direction of the voice — a task that to him was not much less arduous than it would have been to have gone up in the face of a battery — he soon discovered the hidden songster.

"I wonder what the Hurons will think of that!" said the scout, laughing, as he took his companion by the arm, and urged him towards the rear. "If the knaves lie within ear-shot, they will say there are two non-composers instead of one! But here we are safe," he added, pointing to Uncas and his associates. "Now give us the history of the Mingo inventions in natural English, and without any ups and downs of voice."

David gazed about him, at the fierce and wild-looking chiefs, in mute wonder; but assured by the presence of faces that he knew, he soon rallied his faculties so far as to make an intelligent reply.

"The heathen are abroad in goodly numbers," said David, "and, I fear, with evil intent. There has been much howling and ungodly revelry, together with such sounds as it is profanity to utter, in their habitations within the past hour; so much so, in truth, that I have fled to the Delawares in search of peace."

"Your ears might not have profited much by the exchange, had you been quicker of foot," returned the scout, a little dryly. "But let that be as it may; where are the Hurons?"

"They lie hid in the forest, between this spot and their village, in such force, that prudence would teach you instantly to return."

Uncas cast a glance along the range of trees which concealed his own band and mentioned the name of —

"Magua?"

"Is among them. He brought in the maiden that had sojourned with the Delawares, and leaving her in the cave, has put himself, like a raging wolf, at the head of his savages. I know not what has troubled his spirit so greatly!"

"He has left her, you say, in the cave!" interrupted Heyward; "'tis well that we know its situation! May not something be done for her instant relief?"

Uncas looked earnestly at the scout, before he asked —

"What says Hawkeye?"

"Give me twenty rifles, and I will turn to the right, along the stream; and passing by the huts of the beaver, will join the Sagamore and the colonel. You shall then hear the whoop from that quarter; with this wind one may easily send it a mile. Then, Uncas, do you drive in their front; when they come within range of our pieces, we will give them a blow that, I pledge the good name of an old frontiersman, shall make their line bend like an ashen bow. After which, we will carry their village, and take the woman from the cave; when the affair may be finished with the tribe, according to a white man's battle, by a blow and a victory; or, in the Indian fashion, with dodge and cover. There may be no great learning, major, in this plan, but with courage and patience it can all be done."

"I like it much," cried Duncan, who saw the release of Cora was the primary object in the mind of the scout; "I like it much. Let it be instantly attempted." After a short conference, the plan was matured, and rendered more intelligible to the several parties; the different signals were appointed, and the chiefs separated, each to his allotted station.

## CHAPTER 32

*"But plagues shall spread, and funeral fires increase,  
Till the great king, without a ransom paid,  
To her own Chrysa send the black-eyed maid."*

—POPE.

During the time Uncas was making this disposition of his forces, the woods were still, and, with the exception of those who had met in council, apparently as much untenanted, as when they came fresh from the hands of their Almighty Creator. The eye could range, in every direction, through the long and shadowed vistas of the trees; but nowhere was any object to be seen that did not properly belong to the peaceful and slumbering scenery. Here and there a bird was heard fluttering among the branches of the beeches, and occasionally a squirrel dropped a nut, drawing the startled looks of the party, for a moment, to the place; but the instant the casual interruption ceased, the passing air was heard murmuring above their heads, along that verdant and undulating surface of forest, which spread itself unbroken, unless by stream or lake, over such a vast region of country. Across the tract of wilderness, which lay between the Delawares and the village of their enemies, it seemed as if the foot of man had never trodden, so breathing and deep was the silence in which it lay. But Hawkeye, whose duty led him foremost in the adventure, knew the character of those with whom he was about to contend too well to trust the treacherous quiet.

When he saw his little band collected, the scout threw "Killdeer" into the hollow of his arm, and making a silent signal that he would be followed, he led them many rods towards the rear, into the bed of a little brook which they had crossed in advancing. Here he halted; and after waiting for the whole of his grave and attentive warriors to close about him, he spoke in Delaware, demanding —

"Do any of my young men know whither this run will lead us?"

A Delaware stretched forth a hand, with the two fingers separated, and indicating the manner in which they were joined at the root, he answered —

"Before the sun could go his own length, the little water will be in the big." Then he added, pointing in the direction of the place he mentioned, "the two make enough for the beavers."

"I thought as much," returned the scout, glancing his eye upwards at the opening in the tree-tops, "from the course it takes, and the bearings of the mountains. Men, we will keep within the cover of its banks till we scent the Hurons."

His companions gave the usual brief exclamation of assent, but perceiving that their leader was about to lead the way in person, one or two made signs that all was not as it should be. Hawkeye, who comprehended their meaning glances, turned, and perceived that his party had been followed thus far by the singing-master.

"Do you know, friend," asked the scout gravely, and perhaps with a little of the pride of conscious deserving in his manner, "that this is a band of rangers chosen for the most desperate service, and put under the command of one who, though another might say it with a better face, will not be apt to leave them idle. It may not be five, it cannot be thirty minutes before we tread on the body of a Huron, living or dead."

"Though not admonished of your intentions in words," returned David, whose face was a little flushed, and whose ordinarily quiet and unmeaning eyes glimmered with an expression of unusual fire, "your men have reminded me of the children of Jacob going out to battle against the Shechemites, for wickedly aspiring to wedlock with a woman of a race that was favored of the Lord. Now, I have journeyed far, and sojourned much in good and evil with the maiden ye seek; and though not a man of war, with my loins girded and my sword sharpened, yet would I gladly strike a blow in her behalf."

The scout hesitated, as if weighing the chances of such a strange enlistment in his mind before he answered —

"You know not the use of any we'pon. You carry no rifle; and believe me, what the Mingos take they will freely give again."

"Though not a vaunting and bloodily disposed Goliath," returned David, drawing a sling from beneath his parti-colored and uncouth attire, "I have not forgotten the example of the Jewish boy. With this ancient instrument of war have I practised much in my youth, and peradventure the skill has not entirely departed from me."

"Ay!" said Hawkeye, considering the deer-skin thong and apron, with a cold and discouraging eye; "the thing might do

its work among arrows, or even knives; but these Mengwe have been furnished by the Frenchers with a good grooved barrel a man. However, it seems to be your gift to go unharmed amid fire; and as you have hitherto been favored — major, you have left your rifle at a cock; a single shot before the time would be just twenty scalps lost to no purpose — singer, you can follow; we may find use for you in the shoutings.”

“I thank you, friend,” returned David, supplying himself, like his royal namesake, from among the pebbles of the brook; “though not given to the desire to kill, had you sent me away my spirit would have been troubled.”

“Remember,” added the scout, tapping his own head significantly on that spot where Gamut was yet sore, “we come to fight, and not to musickate. Until the general whoop is given, nothing speaks but the rifle.”

David nodded, as much as to signify his acquiescence with the terms; and then Hawkeye, casting another observant glance over his followers, made the signal to proceed.

Their route lay, for the distance of a mile, along the bed of the water-course. Though protected from any great danger of observation by the precipitous banks, and the thick shrubbery which skirted the stream, no precaution known to an Indian attack was neglected. A warrior rather crawled than walked on each flank, so as to catch occasional glimpses into the forest; and every few minutes the band came to a halt, and listened for hostile sounds, with an acuteness of organs that would be scarcely conceivable to a man in a less natural state. Their march was, however, unmolested, and they reached the point where the lesser stream was lost in the greater, without the smallest evidence that their progress had been noted. Here the scout again halted, to consult the signs of the forest.

“We are likely to have a good day for a fight,” he said, in English, addressing Heyward, and glancing his eye upwards at the clouds, which began to move in broad sheets across the firmament; “a bright sun and a glittering barrel are no friends to true sight. Everything is favorable; they have the wind, which will bring down their noises and their smoke too, no little matter in itself; whereas, with us it will be first a shot, and then a clear view. But here is an end of our cover; the beavers have had the range of this stream for hundreds of years, and what atween their food and their dams, there is, as you see, many a girdled stub, but few living trees.”

Hawkeye had, in truth, in these few words, given no bad description of the prospect that now lay in their front. The brook was irregular in its width, sometimes shooting through narrow fissures in the rocks, and at others spreading over acres of bottom land, forming little areas that might be termed ponds. Everywhere along its banks were the mouldering relics of dead trees, in all the stages of decay, from those that groaned on their tottering trunks to such as had recently been robbed of those rugged coats that so mysteriously contain their principle of life. A few long, low, and moss-covered piles were scattered among them, like the memorials of a former and long-departed generation.

All these minute particulars were noted by the scout, with a gravity and interest that they probably had never before attracted. He knew that the Huron encampment lay a short half mile up the brook; and, with the characteristic anxiety of one who dreaded a hidden danger, he was greatly troubled at not finding the smallest trace of the presence of his enemy. Once or twice he felt induced to give the order for a rush, and to attempt the village by surprise; but his experience quickly admonished him of the danger of so useless an experiment. Then he listened intently, and with painful uncertainty, for the sounds of hostility in the quarter where Uncas was left; but nothing was audible except the sighing of the wind, that began to sweep over the bosom of the forest in gusts which threatened a tempest. At length, yielding rather to his unusual impatience than taking counsel from his knowledge, he determined to bring matters to an issue, by unmasking his force, and proceeding cautiously, but steadily, up the stream.

The scout had stood, while making his observations, sheltered by a brake, and his companions still lay in the bed of the ravine, through which the smaller stream debouched; but on hearing his low, though intelligible signal, the whole party stole up the bank, like so many dark spectres, and silently arranged themselves around him. Pointing in the direction he wished to proceed, Hawkeye advanced, the band breaking off in single files, and following so accurately in his footsteps, as if to leave it, if we except Heyward and David, the trail of but a single man.

The party was, however, scarcely uncovered before a volley from a dozen rifles was heard in their rear; and a Delaware leaping high into the air, like a wounded deer, fell at his whole length, perfectly dead.

“Ah! I feared some deviltry like this!” exclaimed the scout, in English; adding, with the quickness of thought, in his adopted tongue, “To cover, men, and charge!”

The band dispersed at the word, and before Heyward had well recovered from his surprise, he found himself standing

alone with David. Luckily, the Hurons had already fallen back, and he was safe from their fire. But this state of things was evidently to be of short continuance; for the scout set the example of pressing on their retreat, by discharging his rifle, and darting from tree to tree, as his enemy slowly yielded ground.

It would seem that the assault had been made by a very small party of the Hurons, which, however, continued to increase in numbers, as it retired on its friends, until the return fire was very nearly, if not quite, equal to that maintained by the advancing Delawares. Heyward threw himself among the combatants, and imitating the necessary caution of his companions, he made quick discharges with his own rifle. The contest now grew warm and stationary. Few were injured, as both parties kept their bodies as much protected as possible by the trees; never, indeed, exposing any part of their persons except in the act of taking aim. But the chances were gradually growing unfavorable to Hawkeye and his band. The quick-sighted scout perceived his danger, without knowing how to remedy it. He saw it was more dangerous to retreat than to maintain his ground; while he found his enemy throwing out men on his flank, which rendered the task of keeping themselves covered so very difficult to the Delawares, as nearly to silence their fire. At this embarrassing moment, when they began to think the whole of the hostile tribe was gradually encircling them, they heard the yell of combatants, and the rattling of arms, echoing under the arches of the wood, at the place where Uncas was posted; a bottom which, in a manner, lay beneath the ground on which Hawkeye and his party were contending.

The effects of this attack were instantaneous, and to the scout and his friends greatly relieving. It would seem that, while his own surprise had been anticipated, and had consequently failed, the enemy, in their turn, having been deceived in its object and in his numbers, had left too small a force to resist the impetuous onset of the young Mohican. This fact was doubly apparent, by the rapid manner in which the battle in the forest rolled upwards towards the village, and by an instant falling off in the number of their assailants, who rushed to assist in maintaining the front, and, as it now proved to be, the principal point of defence.

Animating his followers by his voice, and his own example, Hawkeye then gave the word to bear down upon their foes. The charge, in that rude species of warfare, consisted merely in pushing from cover to cover, nigher to the enemy; and in this manœuvre he was instantly and successfully obeyed. The Hurons were compelled to withdraw, and the scene of the contest rapidly changed from the more open ground on which it had commenced, to a spot where the assailed found a thicket to rest upon. Here the struggle was protracted, arduous, and seemingly of doubtful issue; the Delawares, though none of them fell, beginning to bleed freely, in consequence of the disadvantage at which they were held.

In this crisis, Hawkeye found means to get behind the same tree as that which served for a cover to Heyward; most of his own combatants being within call, a little on his right, where they maintained rapid, though fruitless, discharges on their sheltered enemies.

"You are a young man, major," said the scout, dropping the butt of "Killdeer" to the earth, and leaning on the barrel, a little fatigued with his previous industry; "and it may be your gift to lead armies at some future day ag'in these imps the Mingos, You may here see the philosophy of an Indian fight. It consists mainly in a ready hand, a quick eye, and a good cover. Now, if you had a company of the Royal Americans here, in what manner would you set them to work in this business?"

"The bayonet would make a road."

"Ay, there is white reason in what you say; but a man must ask himself, in this wilderness, how many lives he can spare. No — horse,"<sup>29</sup> continued the scout, shaking his head, like one who mused; "horse, I am ashamed to say, must, sooner or later, decide these scrimmages. The brutes are better than men, and to horse must we come at last. Put a shodden hoof on the moccasin of a redskin; and if his rifle be once emptied, he will never stop to load it again."

<sup>29</sup> The American forest admits of the passage of horse, there being little underbush, and few tangled brakes. The plan of Hawkeye is the one which has always proved the most successful in the battles between the whites and the Indians. Wayne, in his celebrated campaign on the Miami, received the fire of his enemies in line; and then causing his dragoons to wheel round his flanks, the Indians were driven from their covers before they had time to load. One of the most conspicuous of the chiefs who fought in the battle of Miami assured the writer, that the redmen could not fight the warriors with "long knives and leather-stockings"; meaning the dragoons with their sabres and boots.

"This is a subject that might better be discussed at another time," returned Heyward; "shall we charge?"

"I see no contradiction to the gifts of any man, in passing his breathing spells in useful reflections," the scout replied. "As to a rush, I little relish such a measure; for a scalp or two must be thrown away in the attempt. And yet," he added, bending his head aside, to catch the sounds of the distant combat, "if we are to be of use to Uncas, these knaves in our front



must be got rid of!"

Then turning, with a prompt and decided air, he called aloud to his Indians, in their own language. His words were answered by a shout; and, at a given signal, each warrior made a swift movement around his particular tree. The sight of so many dark bodies, glancing before their eyes at the same instant, drew a hasty, and consequently an ineffectual fire from the Hurons. Without stopping to breathe, the Delawares leaped, in long bounds, towards the wood, like so many panthers springing upon their prey. Hawkeye was in front, brandishing his terrible rifle, and animating his followers by his example. A few of the older and more cunning Hurons, who had not been deceived by the artifice which had been practised to draw their fire, now made a close and deadly discharge of their pieces, and justified the apprehensions of the scout, by felling three of his foremost warriors. But the shock was insufficient to repel the impetus of the charge. The Delawares broke into the cover with the ferocity of their natures, and swept away every trace of resistance by the fury of the onset.

The combat endured only for an instant, hand to hand, and then the assailed yielded ground rapidly, until they reached the opposite margin of the thicket, where they clung to the cover, with the sort of obstinacy that is so often witnessed in hunted brutes. At this critical moment, when the success of the struggle was again becoming doubtful, the crack of the rifle was heard behind the Hurons, and a bullet came whizzing from among some beaver lodges, which were situated in the clearing, in their rear, and was followed by the fierce and appalling yell of the war-whoop.

"There speaks the Sagamore!" shouted Hawkeye, answering the cry with his own stentorian voice; "we have them now in face and back!"

The effect on the Hurons was instantaneous. Discouraged by an assault from a quarter that left them no opportunity for cover, their warriors uttered a common yell of disappointment, and breaking off in a body, they spread themselves across the opening, heedless of every consideration but flight. Many fell, in making the experiment, under the bullets and the blows of the pursuing Delawares.

We shall not pause to detail the meeting between the scout and Chingachgook, or the more touching interview that Duncan held with Munro. A few brief and hurried words served to explain the state of things to both parties; and then Hawkeye pointing out the Sagamore to his band, resigned the chief authority into the hands of the Mohican chief. Chingachgook assumed the station to which his birth and experience gave him so distinguished a claim, with the grave dignity that always gives force to the mandates of a native warrior. Following the footsteps of the scout, he led the party back through the thicket, his men scalping the fallen Hurons, and secreting the bodies of their own dead as they proceeded, until they gained a point where the former was content to make a halt.

The warriors, who had breathed themselves freely in the preceding struggle, were now posted on a bit of level ground, sprinkled with trees in sufficient numbers to conceal them. The land fell away rather precipitately in front, and beneath their eyes stretched, for several miles, a narrow, dark, and wooded vale. It was through this dense and dark forest that Uncas was still contending with the main body of the Hurons.

The Mohican and his friends advanced to the brow of the hill, and listened, with practised ears, to the sounds of the combat. A few birds hovered over the leafy bosom of the valley, frightened from their secluded nests; and here and there a light vapory cloud, which seemed already blending with the atmosphere, arose above the trees, and indicated some spot where the struggle had been fierce and stationary.

"The fight is coming up the ascent," said Duncan, pointing in the direction of a new explosion of fire-arms; "we are too much in the centre of their line to be effective."

"They will incline into the hollow, where the cover is thicker," said the scout, "and that will leave us well on their flank. Go, Sagamore; you will hardly be in time to give the whoop, and lead on the young men. I will fight this scrimmage with warriors of my own color. You know me, Mohican; not a Huron of them all shall cross the swell, into your rear, without the notice of 'Killdeer.'"

The Indian chief paused another moment to consider the signs of the contest, which was now rolling rapidly up the ascent, a certain evidence that the Delawares triumphed; nor did he actually quit the place until admonished of the proximity of his friends, as well as enemies, by the bullets of the former, which began to patter among the dried leaves on the ground, like the bits of falling hail which precede the bursting of the tempest. Hawkeye and his three companions withdrew a few paces to a shelter, and awaited the issue with calmness, that nothing but great practice could impart in such a scene.

It was not long before the reports of the rifles began to lose the echoes of the woods, and to sound like weapons discharged in the open air. Then a warrior appeared, here and there, driven to the skirts of the forest, and rallying as he entered the clearing, as at the place where the final stand was to be made. These were soon joined by the others, until a long line of swarthy figures was to be seen clinging to the cover with the obstinacy of desperation. Heyward began to grow impatient, and turned his eyes anxiously in the direction of Chingachgook. The chief was seated on a rock, with nothing visible but his calm visage, considering the spectacle with an eye as deliberate as if he were posted there merely to view the struggle.

"The time is come for the Delawares to strike!" said Duncan.

"Not so, not so," returned the scout; "when he scents his friends, he will let them know that he is here. See, see; the knaves are getting in that clump of pines, like bees settling after their flight. By the Lord, a squaw might put a bullet into the centre of such a knot of dark skins!"

At that instant the whoop was given, and a dozen Hurons fell by a discharge from Chingachgook and his band. The shout that followed was answered by a single war-cry from the forest, and a yell passed through the air that sounded as if a thousand throats were united in a common effort. The Hurons staggered, deserting the centre of their line, and Uncas issued from the forest through the opening they left, at the head of a hundred warriors.

Waving his hands right and left, the young chief pointed out the enemy to his followers, who separated in pursuit. The war now divided, both wings of the broken Hurons seeking protection in the woods again, hotly pressed by the victorious warriors of the Lenape. A minute might have passed, but the sounds were already receding in different directions, and gradually losing their distinctness beneath the echoing arches of the woods. One little knot of Hurons, however, had disdained to seek a cover, and were retiring, like lions at bay, slowly and sullenly up the acclivity which Chingachgook and his band had just deserted, to mingle more closely in the fray. Magua was conspicuous in this party, both by his fierce and savage mien, and by the air of haughty authority he yet maintained.

In his eagerness to expedite the pursuit, Uncas had left himself nearly alone; but the moment his eyes caught the figure of Le Subtil, every other consideration was forgotten. Raising his cry of battle, which recalled some six or seven warriors, and reckless of the disparity of their numbers, he rushed upon his enemy. Le Renard, who watched the movement, paused to receive him with secret joy. But at the moment when he thought the rashness of his impetuous young assailant had left him at his mercy, another shout was given, and La Longue Carabine was seen rushing to the rescue, attended by all his white associates. The Huron instantly turned, and commenced a rapid retreat up the ascent.

There was no time for greetings or congratulations; for Uncas, though unconscious of the presence of his friends, continued the pursuit with the velocity of the wind. In vain Hawkeye called to him to respect the covers; the young Mohican braved the dangerous fire of his enemies, and soon compelled them to a flight as swift as his own headlong speed. It was fortunate that the race was of short continuance, and that the white men were much favored by their position, or the Delaware would soon have outstripped all his companions, and fallen a victim to his own temerity. But ere such a calamity could happen, the pursuers and pursued entered the Wyandot village, within striking distance of each other.

Excited by the presence of their dwellings, and tired of the chase, the Hurons now made a stand, and fought around their council-lodge with the fury of despair. The onset and the issue were like the passage and destruction of a whirlwind. The tomahawk of Uncas, the blows of Hawkeye, and even the still nervous arm of Munro, were all busy for that passing moment, and the ground was quickly strewn with their enemies. Still Magua, though daring and much exposed, escaped from every effort against his life, with that sort of fabled protection that was made to overlook the fortunes of favored heroes in the legends of ancient poetry. Raising a yell that spoke volumes of anger and disappointment, the subtle chief, when he saw his comrades fallen, darted away from the place, attended by his two only surviving friends, leaving the Delawares engaged in stripping the dead of the bloody trophies of their victory.

But Uncas, who had vainly sought him in the *mêlée* bounded forward in pursuit; Hawkeye, Heyward, and David still pressing on his footsteps. The utmost that the scout could effect, was to keep the muzzle of his rifle a little in advance of his friend, to whom, however, it answered every purpose of a charmed shield. Once Magua appeared disposed to make another and a final effort to revenge his losses; but, abandoning his intention as soon as demonstrated, he leaped into a thicket of bushes, through which he was followed by his enemies, and suddenly entered the mouth of the cave already known to the reader. Hawkeye, who had only forbore to fire in tenderness to Uncas, raised a shout of success, and proclaimed aloud,

that now they were certain of their game. The pursuers dashed into the long and narrow entrance, in time to catch a glimpse of the retreating forms of the Hurons. Their passage through the natural galleries and subterranean apartments of the cavern was preceded by the shrieks and cries of hundreds of women and children. The place, seen by its dim and uncertain light, appeared like the shades of the infernal regions, across which unhappy ghosts and savage demons were flitting in multitudes.

Still Uncas kept his eye on Magua, as if life to him possessed but a single object. Heyward and the scout still pressed on his rear, actuated, though possibly in a less degree, by a common feeling. But their way was becoming intricate, in those dark and gloomy passages, and the glimpses of the retiring warriors less distinct and frequent; and for a moment the trace was believed to be lost, when a white robe was seen fluttering in the farther extremity of a passage that seemed to lead up the mountain.

"Tis Cora!" exclaimed Heyward, in a voice in which horror and delight were wildly mingled.

"Cora! Cora!" echoed Uncas, bending forward like a deer.

"Tis the maiden!" shouted the scout, "Courage, lady; we come! — we come!"

The chase was renewed with a diligence rendered tenfold encouraging by this glimpse of the captive. But the way was rugged, broken, and in spots nearly impassable. Uncas abandoned his rifle, and leaped forward with headlong precipitation. Heyward rashly imitated his example, though both were, a moment afterwards, admonished of its madness, by hearing the bellowing of a piece, that the Hurons found time to discharge down the passage in the rocks, the bullet from which even gave the young Mohican a slight wound.

"We must close!" said the scout, passing his friends by a desperate leap; "the knaves will pick us all off at this distance; and see, they hold the maiden so as to shield themselves!"

Though his words were unheeded, or rather unheard, his example was followed by his companions, who, by incredible exertions, got near enough to the fugitives to perceive that Cora was borne along between the two warriors, while Magua prescribed the direction and manner of their flight. At this moment the forms of all four were strongly drawn against an opening in the sky, and they disappeared. Nearly frantic with disappointment, Uncas and Heyward increased efforts that already seemed super-human, and they issued from the cavern on the side of the mountain, in time to note the route of the pursued. The course lay up the ascent, and still continued hazardous and laborious.

Encumbered by his rifle, and, perhaps, not sustained by so deep an interest in the captive as his companions, the scout suffered the latter to precede him a little, Uncas, in his turn, taking the lead of Heyward. In this manner, rocks, precipices, and difficulties were surmounted in an incredibly short space, that at another time, and under other circumstances, would have been deemed almost insuperable. But the impetuous young men were rewarded, by finding that, encumbered with Cora, the Hurons were losing ground in the race.

"Stay, dog of the Wyandots!" exclaimed Uncas, shaking his bright tomahawk at Magua; "a Delaware girl calls stay!"

"I will go no farther," cried Cora, stepping unexpectedly on a ledge of rocks, that overhung a deep precipice, at no great distance from the summit of the mountain. "Kill me if thou wilt, detestable Huron; I will go no farther."

The supporters of the maiden raised their ready tomahawks with the impious joy that fiends are thought to take in mischief, but Magua stayed the uplifted arms. The Huron chief, after casting the weapons he had wrested from his companions over the rock, drew his knife, and turned to his captive, with a look in which conflicting passions fiercely contended.

"Woman," he said, "choose; the wigwam or the knife of Le Subtil!"

Cora regarded him not, but dropping on her knees, she raised her eyes and stretched her arms towards heaven, saying, in a meek and yet confiding voice —

"I am thine! do with me as thou seest best!"

"Woman," repeated Magua, hoarsely, and endeavoring in vain to catch a glance from her serene and beaming eye, "choose!"

But Cora neither heard nor heeded his demand. The form of the Huron trembled in every fibre, and he raised his arm on high, but dropped it again with a bewildered air, like one who doubted. Once more he struggled with himself and lifted the keen weapon again; but just then a piercing cry was heard above them, and Uncas appeared, leaping frantically, from a

fearful height, upon the ledge. Magua recoiled a step; and one of his assistants, profiting by the chance, sheathed his own knife in the bosom of Cora.

The Huron sprang like a tiger on his offending and already retreating countryman, but the falling form of Uncas separated the unnatural combatants. Diverted from his object by this interruption, and maddened by the murder he had just witnessed, Magua buried his weapon in the back of the prostrate Delaware, uttering an unearthly shout as he committed the dastardly deed. But Uncas arose from the blow, as the wounded panther turns upon his foe, and struck the murderer of Cora to his feet, by an effort in which the last of his failing strength was expended. Then, with a stern and steady look, he turned to Le Subtil, and indicated by the expression of his eye, all that he would do, had not the power deserted him. The latter seized the nerveless arm of the unresisting Delaware, and passed his knife into his bosom three several times, before his victim, still keeping his gaze riveted on his enemy with a look of inextinguishable scorn, fell dead at his feet.

“Mercy! mercy! Huron,” cried Heyward, from above, in tones nearly choked by horror; “give mercy, and thou shalt receive it!”

Whirling the bloody knife up at the imploring youth, the victorious Magua uttered a cry so fierce, so wild, and yet so joyous, that it conveyed the sounds of savage triumph to the ears of those who fought in the valley, a thousand feet below. He was answered by a burst from the lips of the scout, whose tall person was just then seen moving swiftly towards him, along those dangerous crags, with steps as bold and reckless as if he possessed the power to move in air. But when the hunter reached the scene of the ruthless massacre, the ledge was tenanted only by the dead.

His keen eye took a single look at the victims, and then shot its glances over the difficulties of the ascent in his front. A form stood at the brow of the mountain, on the very edge of the giddy height, with uplifted arms, in an awful attitude of menace. Without stopping to consider his person, the rifle of Hawkeye was raised; but a rock, which fell on the head of one of the fugitives below exposed the indignant and glowing countenance of the honest Gamut. Then Magua issued from a crevice, and stepping with calm indifference over the body of the last of his associates, he leaped a wide fissure, and ascended the rocks at a point where the arm of David could not reach him. A single bound would carry him to the brow of the precipice, and assure his safety. Before taking the leap, however, the Huron paused, and shaking his hand at the scout, he shouted —

“The pale-faces are dogs! the Delawares women! Magua leaves them on the rocks, for the crows!”

Laughing hoarsely, he made a desperate leap, and fell short of his mark; though his hand grasped a shrub on the verge of the height. The form of Hawkeye had crouched like a beast about to take its spring, and his frame trembled so violently with eagerness, that the muzzle of the half-raised rifle played like a leaf fluttering in the wind. Without exhausting himself with fruitless efforts, the cunning Magua suffered his body to drop to the length of his arms, and found a fragment for his feet to rest on. Then summoning all his powers, he renewed the attempt, and so far succeeded, as to draw his knees on the edge of the mountain. It was now, when the body of his enemy was most collected together, that the agitated weapon of the scout was drawn to his shoulder. The surrounding rocks themselves were not steadier than the piece became, for the single instant that it poured out its contents. The arms of the Huron relaxed, and his body fell back a little, while his knees still kept their position. Turning a relentless look on his enemy, he shook a hand in grim defiance. But his hold loosened, and his dark person was seen cutting the air with its head downwards, for a fleeting instant, until it glided past the fringe of shrubbery which clung to the mountain, in its rapid flight to destruction.



## CHAPTER 33

*"They fought, like brave men, long and well,  
They piled that ground with Moslem slain,  
They conquered — but Bozzaris fell,  
Bleeding at every vein.  
His few surviving comrades saw  
His smile when rang their proud hurrah,  
And the red field was won;  
Then saw in death his eyelids close  
Calmly, as to a night's repose,  
Like flowers at set of sun."*

—HALLECK.

The sun found the Lenape, on the succeeding day, a nation of mourners. The sounds of the battle were over, and they had fed fat their ancient grudge, and had avenged their recent quarrel with the Mengwe, by the destruction of a whole community. The black and murky atmosphere that floated around the spot where the Hurons had encamped, sufficiently announced, of itself, the fate of that wandering tribe; while hundreds of ravens, that struggled above the bleak summits of the mountains, or swept, in noisy flocks, across the wide ranges of the woods, furnished a frightful direction to the scene of the combat. In short, any eye, at all practised in the signs of a frontier warfare, might easily have traced all those unerring evidences of the ruthless results which attend an Indian vengeance.

Still, the sun rose on the Lenape a nation of mourners. No shouts of success, no songs of triumph, were heard, in rejoicings for their victory. The latest straggler had returned from his fell employment, only to strip himself of the terrific emblems of his bloody calling, and to join in the lamentations of his countrymen, as a stricken people. Pride and exultation were supplanted by humility, and the fiercest of human passions was already succeeded by the most profound and unequivocal demonstrations of grief.

The lodges were deserted; but a broad belt of earnest faces encircled a spot in their vicinity, whither everything possessing life had repaired, and where all were now collected, in deep and awful silence. Though beings of every rank and age, of both sexes, and of all pursuits, had united to form this breathing wall of bodies, they were influenced by a single emotion. Each eye was riveted on the centre of that ring, which contained the objects of so much, and of so common, an interest.

Six Delaware girls, with their long, dark, flowing tresses falling loosely across their bosoms, stood apart, and only gave proofs of their existence as they occasionally strewed sweet-scented herbs and forest flowers on a litter of fragrant plants, that, under a pall of Indian robes, supported all that now remained of the ardent, high-souled, and generous Cora. Her form was concealed in many wrappers of the same simple manufacture, and her face was shut forever from the gaze of men. At her feet was seated the desolate Munro. His aged head was bowed nearly to the earth, in compelled submission to the stroke of Providence; but a hidden anguish struggled about his furrowed brow, that was only partially concealed by the careless locks of gray that had fallen, neglected, on his temples. Gamut stood at his side, his meek head bared to the rays of the sun, while his eyes, wandering and concerned, seemed to be equally divided between that little volume, which contained so many quaint but holy maxims, and the being in whose behalf his soul yearned to administer consolation. Heyward was also nigh, supporting himself against a tree, and endeavoring to keep down those sudden risings of sorrow that it required his utmost manhood to subdue.

But sad and melancholy as this group may easily be imagined, it was far less touching than another, that occupied the opposite space of the same area. Seated, as in life, with his form and limbs arranged in grave and decent composure, Uncas appeared, arrayed in the most gorgeous ornaments that the wealth of the tribe could furnish. Rich plumes nodded above his head; wampum, gorgets, bracelets, and medals, adorned his person in profusion; though his dull eye and vacant lineaments too strongly contradicted the idle tale of pride they would convey.

Directly in front of the corpse Chingachgook was placed, without arms, paint, or adornment of any sort, except the bright blue blazonry of his race, that was indelibly impressed on his naked bosom. During the long period that the tribe had been thus collected, the Mohican warrior had kept a steady, anxious look on the cold and senseless countenance of his son. So riveted and intense had been that gaze, and so changeless his attitude, that a stranger might not have told the living

from the dead, but for the occasional gleamings of a troubled spirit that shot athwart the dark visage of one, and the death-like calm that had forever settled on the lineaments of the other.

The scout was hard by, leaning in a pensive posture on his own fatal and avenging weapon; while Tamenund, supported by the elders of his nation, occupied a high place at hand, whence he might look down on the mute and sorrowful assemblage of his people.

Just within the inner edge of the circle stood a soldier, in the military attire of a strange nation; and without it was his war-horse, in the centre of a collection of mounted domestics, seemingly in readiness to undertake some distant journey. The vestments of the stranger announced him to be one who held a responsible situation near the person of the captain of the Canadas; and who, as it would now seem, finding his errand of peace frustrated by the fierce impetuosity of his allies, was content to become a silent and sad spectator of the fruits of a contest that he had arrived too late to anticipate.

The day was drawing to the close of its first quarter, and yet had the multitude maintained its breathing stillness since its dawn. No sound louder than a stifled sob had been heard among them, nor had even a limb been moved throughout that long and painful period, except to perform the simple and touching offerings that were made, from time to time, in commemoration of the dead. The patience and forbearance of Indian fortitude could alone support such an appearance of abstraction, as seemed now to have turned each dark and motionless figure into stone.

At length, the sage of the Delawares stretched forth an arm, and leaning on the shoulders of his attendants, he arose with an air as feeble as if another age had already intervened between the man who had met his nation the preceding day, and him who now tottered on his elevated stand.

“Men of the Lenape!” he said, in hollow tones that sounded like a voice charged with some prophetic mission; “the face of the Manitou is behind a cloud! His eye is turned from you; His ears are shut; His tongue gives no answer. You see Him not; yet His judgments are before you. Let your hearts be open and your spirits tell no lie. Men of the Lenape! the face of the Manitou is behind a cloud.”

As this simple and yet terrible annunciation stole on the ears of the multitude, a stillness as deep and awful succeeded as if the venerated spirit they worshipped had uttered the words without the aid of human organs; and even the inanimate Uncas appeared a being of life, compared with the humbled and submissive throng by whom he was surrounded. As the immediate effect, however, gradually passed away, a low murmur of voices commenced a sort of chant in honor of the dead. The sounds were those of females, and were thrillingly soft and wailing. The words were connected by no regular continuation, but as one ceased another took up the eulogy, or lamentation, whichever it might be called, and gave vent to her emotions in such language as was suggested by her feelings and the occasion. At intervals the speaker was interrupted by general and loud bursts of sorrow, during which the girls around the bier of Cora plucked the plants and flowers blindly from her body, as if bewildered with grief. But, in the milder moments of their plaint, these emblems of purity and sweetness were cast back to their places, with every sign of tenderness and regret. Though rendered less connected by many and general interruptions and outbursts, a translation of their language would have contained a regular descant, which, in substance, might have proved to possess a train of consecutive ideas.

A girl, selected for the task by her rank and qualifications, commenced by modest allusions to the qualities of the deceased warrior, embellishing her expressions with those oriental images that the Indians have probably brought with them from the extremes of the other continent, and which form of themselves a link to connect the ancient histories of the two worlds. She called him the “panther of his tribe”; and described him as one whose moccasin left no trail on the dews; whose bound was like the leap of the young fawn; whose eye was brighter than a star in the dark night; and whose voice, in battle, was loud as the thunder of the Manitou. She reminded him of the mother who bore him, and dwelt forcibly on the happiness she must feel in possessing such a son. She bade him tell her, when they met in the world of spirits, that the Delaware girls had shed tears above the grave of her child, and had called her blessed.

Then, they who succeeded, changing their tones to a milder and still more tender strain, alluded, with the delicacy and sensitiveness of woman, to the stranger maiden, who had left the upper earth at a time so near his own departure, as to render the will of the Great Spirit too manifest to be disregarded. They admonished him to be kind to her, and to have consideration for her ignorance of those arts which were so necessary to the comfort of a warrior like himself. They dwelt upon her matchless beauty, and on her noble resolution, without the taint of envy, and as angels may be thought to delight in a superior excellence; adding, that these endowments should prove more than equivalent for any little imperfections in

her education.

After which, others again, in due succession, spoke to the maiden herself, in the low, soft language of tenderness and love. They exhorted her to be of cheerful mind, and to fear nothing for future welfare. A hunter would be her companion, who knew how to provide for her smallest wants; and a warrior was at her side who was able to protect her against every danger. They promised that her path should be pleasant, and her burden light. They cautioned her against unavailing regrets for the friends of her youth, and the scenes where her fathers had dwelt; assuring her that the "blessed hunting-grounds of the Lenape" contained vales as pleasant, streams as pure, and flowers as sweet, as the "heaven of the pale-faces." They advised her to be attentive to the wants of her companion, and never to forget the distinction which the Manitou had so wisely established between them. Then, in a wild burst of their chant, they sang with united voices the temper of the Mohican's mind. They pronounced him noble, manly and generous; all that became a warrior, and all that a maid might love. Clothing their ideas in the most remote and subtle images, they betrayed, that, in the short period of their intercourse, they had discovered, with the intuitive perception of their sex, the truant disposition of his inclinations. The Delaware girls had found no favor in his eyes! He was of a race that had once been lords on the shores of the salt lake, and his wishes had led him back to a people who dwelt about the graves of his fathers. Why should not such a predilection be encouraged! That she was of a blood purer and richer than the rest of her nation, any eye might have seen; that she was equal to the dangers and daring of a life in the woods, her conduct had proved; and now, they added, the "wise one of the earth" had transplanted her to a place where she would find congenial spirits, and might be forever happy.

Then, with another transition in voice and subject, allusions were made to the virgin who wept in the adjacent lodge. They compared her to flakes of snow; as pure, as white, as brilliant, and as liable to melt in the fierce heats of summer, or congeal in the frosts of winter. They doubted not that she was lovely in the eyes of the young chief, whose skin and whose sorrow seemed so like her own; but, though far from expressing such a preference, it was evident they deemed her less excellent than the maid they mourned. Still they denied her no need her rare charms might properly claim. Her ringlets were compared to the exuberant tendrils of the vine, her eye to the blue vault of the heavens, and the most spotless cloud, with its glowing flush of the sun, was admitted to be less attractive than her bloom.

During these and similar songs nothing was audible but the murmurs of the music; relieved, as it was, or rather rendered terrible, by those occasional bursts of grief which might be called its choruses. The Delawares themselves listened like charmed men; and it was very apparent, by the variations of their speaking countenances, how deep and true was their sympathy. Even David was not reluctant to lend his ears to tones of voices so sweet; and long ere the chant was ended, his gaze announced that his soul was enthralled.

The scout, to whom alone, of all the white men, the words were intelligible, suffered himself to be a little aroused from his meditative posture, and bent his face aside, to catch their meaning, as the girls proceeded. But when they spoke of the future prospects of Cora and Uncas, he shook his head, like one who knew the error of their simple creed, and resuming his reclining attitude, he maintained it until the ceremony — if that might be called a ceremony, in which feeling was so deeply imbued — was finished. Happily for the self-command of both Heyward and Munro, they knew not the meaning of the wild sounds they heard.

Chingachgook was a solitary exception to the interest manifested by the native part of the audience. His look never changed throughout the whole of the scene, nor did a muscle move in his rigid countenance, even at the wildest or the most pathetic parts of the lamentation. The cold and senseless remains of his son was all to him, and every other sense but that of sight seemed frozen, in order that his eyes might take their final gaze at those lineaments he had so long loved, and which were now about to be closed forever from his view.

In this stage of the funeral obsequies, a warrior much renowned for deeds in arms, and more especially for services in the recent combat, a man of stern and grave demeanor, advanced slowly from the crowd, and placed himself nigh the person of the dead.

"Why hast thou left us, pride of the Wapanachki?" he said, addressing himself to the dull ears of Uncas, as if the empty clay retained the faculties of the animated man; "thy time has been like that of the sun when in the trees; thy glory brighter than his light at noonday. Thou art gone, youthful warrior, but a hundred Wyandots are clearing the briars from thy path to the world of spirits. Who that saw thee in battle would believe that thou couldst die? Who before thee has ever shown Uttawa the way into the fight? Thy feet were like the wings of eagles; thine arm heavier than falling branches from the pine; and thy voice like the Manitou when he speaks in the clouds. The tongue of Uttawa is weak," he added, looking about

him with a melancholy gaze, “and his heart exceeding heavy. Pride of the Wapanachki, why hast thou left us?”

He was succeeded by others, in due order, until most of the high and gifted men of the nation had sung or spoken their tribute of praise over the *manes* of the deceased chief. When each had ended, another deep and breathing silence reigned in all the place.

Then a low, deep sound was heard, like the suppressed accompaniment of distant music, rising just high enough on the air to be audible, and yet so indistinctly, as to leave its character, and the place whence it proceeded, alike matters of conjecture. It was, however, succeeded by another and another strain, each in a higher key, until they grew on the ear, first in long drawn and often repeated interjections, and finally in words. The lips of Chingachgook had so far parted, as to announce that it was the monody of the father. Though not an eye was turned towards him, nor the smallest sign of impatience exhibited, it was apparent, by the manner in which the multitude elevated their heads to listen, that they drank in the sounds with an intenseness of attention, that none but Tamenund himself had ever before commanded. But they listened in vain. The strains rose just so loud as to become intelligible, and then grew fainter and more trembling, until they finally sank on the ear, as if borne away by a passing breath of wind. The lips of the Sagamore closed, and he remained silent in his seat, looking, with his riveted eye and motionless form, like some creature that had been turned from the Almighty hand with the form but without the spirit of a man. The Delawares, who knew by these symptoms that the mind of their friend was not prepared for so mighty an effort of fortitude, relaxed in their attention; and, with an innate delicacy, seemed to bestow all their thoughts on the obsequies of the stranger maiden.

A signal was given, by one of the elder chiefs, to the women who crowded that part of the circle near which the body of Cora lay. Obedient to the sign, the girls raised the bier to the elevation of their heads, and advanced with slow and regulated steps, chanting, as they proceeded, another wailing song in praise of the deceased. Gamut, who had been a close observer of rites he deemed so heathenish, now bent his head over the shoulder of the unconscious father, whispering —

“They move with the remains of thy child; shall we not follow, and see them interred with Christian burial?”

Munro started, as if the last trumpet had sounded in his ear, and bestowing one anxious and hurried glance around him, he arose and followed in the simple train, with the mien of a soldier, but bearing the full burden of a parent’s suffering. His friends pressed around him with a sorrow that was too strong to be termed sympathy — even the young Frenchman joining in the procession, with the air of a man who was sensibly touched at the early and melancholy fate of one so lovely. But when the last and humblest female of the tribe had joined in the wild, and yet ordered array, the men of the Lenape contracted their circle, and formed again around the person of Uncas, as silent, as grave, and as motionless as before.

The place which had been chosen for the grave of Cora was a little knoll, where a cluster of young and healthful pines had taken root, forming of themselves a melancholy and appropriate shade over the spot. On reaching it the girls deposited their burden, and continued for many minutes waiting, with characteristic patience, and native timidity, for some evidence that they whose feelings were most concerned were content with the arrangement. At length the scout, who alone understood their habits, said, in their own language —

“My daughters have done well; the white men thank them.”

Satisfied with this testimony in their favor, the girls proceeded to deposit the body in a shell, ingeniously, and not inelegantly, fabricated of the bark of the birch; after which they lowered it into its dark and final abode. The ceremony of covering the remains, and concealing the marks of the fresh earth, by leaves and other natural and customary objects, was conducted with the same simple and silent forms. But when the labors of the kind beings who had performed these sad and friendly offices were so far completed, they hesitated, in a way to show that they knew not how much further they might proceed. It was in this stage of the rites that the scout again addressed them:—

“My young women have done enough,” he said; “the spirit of a pale-face has no need of food or raiment, their gifts being according to the heaven of their color. I see,” he added, glancing an eye at David, who was preparing his book in a manner that indicated an intention to lead the way in sacred song, “that one who better knows the Christian fashions is about to speak.”

The females stood modestly aside, and, from having been the principal actors in the scene, they now became the meek and attentive observers of that which followed. During the time David was occupied in pouring out the pious feelings of his spirit in this manner, not a sign of surprise, nor a look of impatience, escaped them. They listened like those who knew the



meaning of the strange words, and appeared as if they felt the mingled emotions of sorrow, hope, and resignation, they were intended to convey.

Excited by the scene he had just witnessed, and perhaps influenced by his own secret emotions, the master of song exceeded his usual efforts. His full, rich voice was not found to suffer by a comparison with the soft tones of the girls; and his more modulated strains possessed, at least for the ears of those to whom they were peculiarly addressed, the additional power of intelligence. He ended the anthem, as he had commenced it, in the midst of a grave and solemn stillness.

When, however, the closing cadence had fallen on the ears of his auditors, the secret, timorous glances of the eyes, and the general, and yet subdued movement of the assemblage, betrayed that something was expected from the father of the deceased. Munro seemed sensible that the time was come for him to exert what is, perhaps, the greatest effort of which human nature is capable. He bared his gray locks, and looked around the timid and quiet throng by which he was encircled with a firm and collected countenance. Then motioning with his hand for the scout to listen, he said —

“Say to these kind and gentle females, that a heartbroken and failing man returns them his thanks. Tell them, that the Being we all worship, under different names, will be mindful of their charity; and that the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around his throne without distinction of sex, or rank, or color.”

The scout listened to the tremulous voice in which the veteran delivered these words, and shook his head slowly when they were ended, as one who doubted their efficacy.

“To tell them this,” he said, “would be to tell them that the snows come not in the winter, or that the sun shines fiercest when the trees are stripped of their leaves.”

Then turning to the women, he made such a communication of the other’s gratitude as he deemed most suited to the capacities of his listeners. The head of Munro had already sunk upon his chest, and he was again fast relapsing into melancholy, when the young Frenchman before named ventured to touch him lightly on the elbow. As soon as he had gained the attention of the mourning old man, he pointed towards a group of young Indians, who approached with a light but closely covered litter, and then pointed upward towards the sun.

“I understand you, sir,” returned Munro, with a voice of forced firmness; “I understand you. It is the will of Heaven, and I submit. Cora, my child! if the prayers of a heartbroken father could avail thee now, how blessed shouldst thou be! Come, gentlemen,” he added, looking about him with an air of lofty composure, though the anguish that quivered in his faded countenance was far too powerful to be concealed, “our duty here is ended; let us depart.”

Heyward gladly obeyed a summons that took them from a spot where, each instant, he felt his self-control was about to desert him. While his companions were mounting, however, he found time to press the hand of the scout, and to repeat the terms of an engagement they had made, to meet again within the posts of the British army. Then gladly throwing himself into the saddle, he spurred his charger to the side of the litter, whence low and stifled sobs alone announced the presence of Alice. In this manner, the head of Munro again dropping on his bosom, with Heyward and David following in sorrowing silence, and attended by the aide of Montcalm with his guard, all the white men, with the exception of Hawkeye, passed from before the eyes of the Delawares, and were soon buried in the vast forests of that region.

But the tie which, through their common calamity, had united the feelings of these simple dwellers in the woods with the strangers who had thus transiently visited them, was not so easily broken. Years passed away before the traditionary tale of the white maiden, and of the young warrior of the Mohicans, ceased to beguile the long nights and tedious marches, or to animate their youthful and brave with a desire for vengeance. Neither were the secondary actors in these momentous incidents forgotten. Through the medium of the scout, who served for years afterwards as a link between them and civilized life, they learned, in answer to their inquiries, that the “Gray Head” was speedily gathered to his fathers — borne down, as was erroneously believed, by his military misfortunes; and that the “Open Hand” had conveyed his surviving daughter far into the settlements of the “pale-faces,” where her tears had at last ceased to flow, and had been succeeded by the bright smiles which were better suited to her joyous nature.

But these were events of a time later than that which concerns our tale. Deserted by all of his color, Hawkeye returned to the spot where his own sympathies led him, with a force that no ideal bond of union could bestow. He was just in time to catch a parting look of the features of Uncas, whom the Delawares were already inclosing in his last vestments of skins. They paused to permit the longing and lingering gaze of the sturdy woodsman, and when it was ended, the body was enveloped, never to be unclosed again. Then came a procession like the other, and the whole nation was collected about the

temporary grave of the chief — temporary, because it was proper that, at some future day, his bones should rest among those of his own people.

The movement, like the feeling, had been simultaneous and general. The same grave expression of grief, the same rigid silence, and the same deference to the principal mourner, were observed around the place of interment as have been already described. The body was deposited in an attitude of repose, facing the rising sun, with the implements of war and of the chase at hand, in readiness for the final journey. An opening was left in the shell, by which it was protected from the soil, for the spirit to communicate with its earthly tenement, when necessary; and the whole was concealed from the instinct, and protected from the ravages of the beasts of prey, with an ingenuity peculiar to the natives. The manual rites then ceased, and all present reverted to the more spiritual part of the ceremonies.

Chingachgook became once more the object of the common attention. He had not yet spoken, and something consolatory and instructive was expected from so renowned a chief on an occasion of such interest. Conscious of the wishes of the people, the stern and self-restrained warrior raised his face, which had latterly been buried in his robe, and looked about him with a steady eye. His firmly compressed and expressive lips then severed, and for the first time during the long ceremonies his voice was distinctly audible.

“Why do my brothers mourn!” he said, regarding the dark race of dejected warriors by whom he was environed; “why do my daughters weep! that a young man has gone to the happy hunting-grounds; that a chief has filled his time with honor! He was good; he was dutiful; he was brave. Who can deny it? The Manitou had need of such a warrior, and He has called him away. As for me, the son and the father of Uncas, I am a blazed pine, in a clearing of the pale-faces. My race has gone from the shores of the salt lake, and the hills of the Delawares. But who can say that the Serpent of his tribe has forgotten his wisdom? I am alone —”

“No, no,” cried Hawkeye, who had been gazing with a yearning look at the rigid features of his friend, with something like his own self-command, but whose philosophy could endure no longer; “no, Sagamore, not alone. The gifts of our colors may be different, but God has so placed us as to journey in the same path. I have no kin, and I may also say, like you, no people. He was your son, and a redskin by nature; and it may be that your blood was nearer — but if ever I forget the lad who has so often fou’t at my side in war, and slept at my side in peace, may He who made us all, whatever may be our color or our gifts, forget me! The boy has left us for a time; but, Sagamore, you are not alone.”

Chingachgook grasped the hand that, in the warmth of feeling, the scout had stretched across the fresh earth, and in that attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain.

In the midst of the awful stillness with which such a burst of feeling, coming, as it did, from the two most renowned warriors of that region, was received, Tamenund lifted his voice to disperse the multitude.

“It is enough,” he said. “Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the redmen has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans.”



# **The Pathfinder - The Inland Sea**

**James  
Fenimore  
Cooper**



THE UNIVERSITY  
a/ADELAIDE

## CHAPTER 1.

*The turf shall be my fragrant shrine;  
My temple, Lord! that arch of thine;  
My censor's breath the mountain airs,  
And silent thoughts my only prayers.*

—MOORE

The sublimity connected with vastness is familiar to every eye. The most abstruse, the most far-reaching, perhaps the most chastened of the poet's thoughts, crowd on the imagination as he gazes into the depths of the illimitable void. The expanse of the ocean is seldom seen by the novice with indifference; and the mind, even in the obscurity of night, finds a parallel to that grandeur, which seems inseparable from images that the senses cannot compass. With feelings akin to this admiration and awe — the offspring of sublimity — were the different characters with which the action of this tale must open, gazing on the scene before them. Four persons in all — two of each sex — they had managed to ascend a pile of trees, that had been upturned by a tempest, to catch a view of the objects that surrounded them. It is still the practice of the country to call these spots wind-rows. By letting in the light of heaven upon the dark and damp recesses of the wood, they form a sort of oases in the solemn obscurity of the virgin forests of America. The particular wind-row of which we are writing lay on the brow of a gentle acclivity; and, though small, it had opened the way for an extensive view to those who might occupy its upper margin, a rare occurrence to the traveller in the woods. Philosophy has not yet determined the nature of the power that so often lays desolate spots of this description; some ascribing it to the whirlwinds which produce waterspouts on the ocean, while others again impute it to sudden and violent passages of streams of the electric fluid; but the effects in the woods are familiar to all. On the upper margin of the opening, the viewless influence had piled tree on tree, in such a manner as had not only enabled the two males of the party to ascend to an elevation of some thirty feet above the level of the earth, but, with a little care and encouragement, to induce their more timid companions to accompany them. The vast trunks which had been broken and driven by the force of the gust lay blended like jack-straws; while their branches, still exhaling the fragrance of withering leaves, were interlaced in a manner to afford sufficient support to the hands. One tree had been completely uprooted, and its lower end, filled with earth, had been cast uppermost, in a way to supply a sort of staging for the four adventurers, when they had gained the desired distance from the ground.

The reader is to anticipate none of the appliances of people of condition in the description of the personal appearances of the group in question. They were all wayfarers in the wilderness; and had they not been, neither their previous habits, nor their actual social positions, would have accustomed them to many of the luxuries of rank. Two of the party, indeed, a male and female, belonged to the native owners of the soil, being Indians of the well-known tribe of the Tuscaroras; while their companions were — a man, who bore about him the peculiarities of one who had passed his days on the ocean, and was, too, in a station little, if any, above that of a common mariner; and his female associate, who was a maiden of a class in no great degree superior to his own; though her youth, sweetness and countenance, and a modest, but spirited mien, lent that character of intellect and refinement which adds so much to the charm of beauty in the sex. On the present occasion, her full blue eye reflected the feeling of sublimity that the scene excited, and her pleasant face was beaming with the pensive expression with which all deep emotions, even though they bring the most grateful pleasure, shadow the countenances of the ingenuous and thoughtful.

And truly the scene was of a nature deeply to impress the imagination of the beholder. Towards the west, in which direction the faces of the party were turned, the eye ranged over an ocean of leaves, glorious and rich in the varied and lively verdure of a generous vegetation, and shaded by the luxuriant tints which belong to the forty-second degree of latitude. The elm with its graceful and weeping top, the rich varieties of the maple, most of the noble oaks of the American forest, with the broad-leaved linden known in the parlance of the country as the basswood, mingled their uppermost branches, forming one broad and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage which stretched away towards the setting sun, until it bounded the horizon, by blending with the clouds, as the waves and the sky meet at the base of the vault of heaven. Here and there, by some accident of the tempests, or by a caprice of nature, a trifling opening among these giant members of the forest permitted an inferior tree to struggle upward toward the light, and to lift its modest head nearly to a level with the surrounding surface of verdure. Of this class were the birch, a tree of some account in regions less favored, the quivering aspen, various generous nut-woods, and divers others which resembled the ignoble and vulgar, thrown by

circumstances into the presence of the stately and great. Here and there, too, the tall straight trunk of the pine pierced the vast field, rising high above it, like some grand monument reared by art on a plain of leaves.

It was the vastness of the view, the nearly unbroken surface of verdure, that contained the principle of grandeur. The beauty was to be traced in the delicate tints, relieved by graduations of light and shade; while the solemn repose induced the feeling allied to awe.

"Uncle," said the wondering, but pleased girl, addressing her male companion, whose arm she rather touched than leaned on, to steady her own light but firm footing, "this is like a view of the ocean you so much love!"

"So much for ignorance, and a girl's fancy, Magnet," — a term of affection the sailor often used in allusion to his niece's personal attractions; "no one but a child would think of likening this handful of leaves to a look at the real Atlantic. You might seize all these tree-tops to Neptune's jacket, and they would make no more than a nosegay for his bosom."

"More fanciful than true, I think, uncle. Look thither; it must be miles on miles, and yet we see nothing but leaves! what could one behold, if looking at the ocean?"

"More!" returned the uncle, giving an impatient gesture with the elbow the other touched, for his arms were crossed, and the hands were thrust into the bosom of a vest of red cloth, a fashion of the times — "more, Magnet! say, rather, what less? Where are your combing seas, your blue water, your rollers, your breakers, your whales, or your waterspouts, and your endless motion, in this bit of a forest, child?"

"And where are your tree-tops, your solemn silence, your fragrant leaves, and your beautiful green, uncle, on the ocean?"

"Tut, Magnet! if you understood the thing, you would know that green water is a sailor's bane. He scarcely relishes a greenhorn less."

"But green trees are a different thing. Hist! that sound is the air breathing among the leaves!"

"You should hear a nor-wester breathe, girl, if you fancy wind aloft. Now, where are your gales, and hurricanes, and trades, and levanters, and such like incidents, in this bit of a forest? And what fishes have you swimming beneath yonder tame surface?"

"That there have been tempests here, these signs around us plainly show; and beasts, if not fishes, are beneath those leaves."

"I do not know that," returned the uncle, with a sailor's dogmatism. "They told us many stories at Albany of the wild animals we should fall in with, and yet we have seen nothing to frighten a seal. I doubt if any of your inland animals will compare with a low latitude shark."

"See!" exclaimed the niece, who was more occupied with the sublimity and beauty of the "boundless wood" than with her uncle's arguments; "yonder is a smoke curling over the tops of the trees — can it come from a house?"

"Ay, ay; there is a look of humanity in that smoke," returned the old seaman, "which is worth a thousand trees. I must show it to Arrowhead, who may be running past a port without knowing it. It is probable there is a caboose where there is a smoke."

As he concluded, the uncle drew a hand from his bosom, touched the male Indian, who was standing near him, lightly on the shoulder, and pointed out a thin line of vapor which was stealing slowly out of the wilderness of leaves, at a distance of about a mile, and was diffusing itself in almost imperceptible threads of humidity in the quivering atmosphere. The Tuscarora was one of those noble-looking warriors oftener met with among the aborigines of this continent a century since than to-day; and, while he had mingled sufficiently with the colonists to be familiar with their habits and even with their language, he had lost little, if any, of the wild grandeur and simple dignity of a chief. Between him and the old seaman the intercourse had been friendly, but distant; for the Indian had been too much accustomed to mingle with the officers of the different military posts he had frequented not to understand that his present companion was only a subordinate. So imposing, indeed, had been the quiet superiority of the Tuscarora's reserve, that Charles Cap, for so was the seaman named, in his most dogmatical or facetious moments, had not ventured on familiarity in an intercourse which had now lasted more than a week. The sight of the curling smoke, however, had struck the latter like the sudden appearance of a sail at sea; and, for the first time since they met, he ventured to touch the warrior, as has been related.

The quick eye of the Tuscarora instantly caught a sight of the smoke; and for full a minute he stood, slightly raised on tiptoe, with distended nostrils, like the buck that scents a taint in the air, and a gaze as riveted as that of the trained pointer

while he waits his master's aim. Then, falling back on his feet, a low exclamation, in the soft tones that form so singular a contrast to its harsher cries in the Indian warrior's voice, was barely audible; otherwise, he was undisturbed. His countenance was calm, and his quick, dark, eagle eye moved over the leafy panorama, as if to take in at a glance every circumstance that might enlighten his mind. That the long journey they had attempted to make through a broad belt of wilderness was necessarily attended with danger, both uncle and niece well knew; though neither could at once determine whether the sign that others were in their vicinity was the harbinger of good or evil.

"There must be Oneidas or Tuscaroras near us, Arrowhead," said Cap, addressing his Indian companion by his conventional English name; "will it not be well to join company with them, and get a comfortable berth for the night in their wigwam?"

"No wigwam there," Arrowhead answered in his unmoved manner — "too much tree."

"But Indians must be there; perhaps some old mess-mates of your own, Master Arrowhead."

"No Tuscarora — no Oneida — no Mohawk — pale-face fire."

"The devil it is? Well, Magnet, this surpasses a seaman's philosophy: we old sea-dogs can tell a lubber's nest from a mate's hammock; but I do not think the oldest admiral in his Majesty's fleet can tell a king's smoke from a collier's."

The idea that human beings were in their vicinity, in that ocean of wilderness, had deepened the flush on the blooming cheek and brightened the eye of the fair creature at his side; but she soon turned with a look of surprise to her relative, and said hesitatingly, for both had often admired the Tuscarora's knowledge, or, we might almost say, instinct —

"A pale-face's fire! Surely, uncle, he cannot know *that*?"

"Ten days since, child, I would have sworn to it; but now I hardly know what to believe. May I take the liberty of asking, Arrowhead, why you fancy that smoke, now, a pale-face's smoke, and not a red-skin's?"

"Wet wood," returned the warrior, with the calmness with which the pedagogue might point out an arithmetical demonstration to his puzzled pupil. "Much wet — much smoke; much water — black smoke."

"But, begging your pardon, Master Arrowhead, the smoke is not black, nor is there much of it. To my eye, now, it is as light and fanciful a smoke as ever rose from a captain's tea-kettle, when nothing was left to make the fire but a few chips from the dunnage."

"Too much water," returned Arrowhead, with a slight nod of the head; "Tuscarora too cunning to make fire with water! Pale-face too much book, and burn anything; much book, little know."

"Well, that's reasonable, I allow," said Cap, who was no devotee of learning: "he means that as a hit at your reading, Magnet; for the chief has sensible notions of things in his own way. How far, now, Arrowhead, do you make us, by your calculation, from the bit of a pond that you call the Great Lake, and towards which we have been so many days shaping our course?"

The Tuscarora looked at the seaman with quiet superiority as he answered, "Ontario, like heaven; one sun, and the great traveller will know it."

"Well, I have been a great traveller, I cannot deny; but of all my v'y'ges this has been the longest, the least profitable, and the farthest inland. If this body of fresh water is so nigh, Arrowhead, and so large, one might think a pair of good eyes would find it out; for apparently everything within thirty miles is to be seen from this lookout."

"Look," said Arrowhead, stretching an arm before him with quiet grace; "Ontario!"

"Uncle, you are accustomed to cry 'Land ho!' but not 'Water ho!' and you do not see it," cried the niece, laughing, as girls will laugh at their own idle conceits.

"How now, Magnet! dost suppose that I shouldn't know my native element if it were in sight?"

"But Ontario is not your native element, dear uncle; for you come from the salt water, while this is fresh."

"That might make some difference to your young mariner, but none to the old one. I should know water, child, were I to see it in China."

"Ontario," repeated Arrowhead, with emphasis, again stretching his hand towards the north-west.

Cap looked at the Tuscarora, for the first time since their acquaintance, with something like an air of contempt, though he did not fail to follow the direction of the chief's eye and arm, both of which were directed towards a vacant point in the heavens, a short distance above the plain of leaves.

"Ay, ay; this is much as I expected, when I left the coast in search of a fresh-water pond," resumed Cap, shrugging his shoulders like one whose mind was made up, and who thought no more need be said. "Ontario may be there, or, for that matter, it may be in my pocket. Well, I suppose there will be room enough, when we reach it, to work our canoe. But Arrowhead, if there be pale-faces in our neighborhood, I confess I should like to get within hail of them."

The Tuscarora now gave a quiet inclination of his head, and the whole party descended from the roots of the up-torn tree in silence. When they reached the ground, Arrowhead intimated his intention to go towards the fire, and ascertain who had lighted it; while he advised his wife and the two others to return to a canoe, which they had left in the adjacent stream, and await his return.

"Why, chief, this might do on soundings, and in an offing where one knew the channel," returned old Cap; "but in an unknown region like this I think it unsafe to trust the pilot alone too far from the ship: so, with your leave, we will not part company."

"What my brother want?" asked the Indian gravely, though without taking offence at a distrust that was sufficiently plain.

"Your company, Master Arrowhead, and no more. I will go with you and speak these strangers."

The Tuscarora assented without difficulty, and again he directed his patient and submissive little wife, who seldom turned her full rich black eye on him but to express equally her respect, her dread, and her love, to proceed to the boat. But here Magnet raised a difficulty. Although spirited, and of unusual energy under circumstances of trial, she was but woman; and the idea of being entirely deserted by her two male protectors, in the midst of a wilderness that her senses had just told her was seemingly illimitable, became so keenly painful, that she expressed a wish to accompany her uncle.

"The exercise will be a relief, dear sir, after sitting so long in the canoe," she added, as the rich blood slowly returned to a cheek that had paled in spite of her efforts to be calm; "and there may be females with the strangers."

"Come, then, child; it is but a cable's length, and we shall return an hour before the sun sets."

With this permission, the girl, whose real name was Mabel Dunham, prepared to be of the party; while the Dew-of-June, as the wife of Arrowhead was called, passively went her way towards the canoe, too much accustomed to obedience, solitude, and the gloom of the forest to feel apprehension.

The three who remained in the wind-row now picked their way around its tangled maze, and gained the margin of the woods. A few glances of the eye sufficed for Arrowhead; but old Cap deliberately set the smoke by a pocket-compass, before he trusted himself within the shadows of the trees.

"This steering by the nose, Magnet, may do well enough for an Indian, but your thoroughbred knows the virtue of the needle," said the uncle, as he trudged at the heels of the light-stepping Tuscarora. "America would never have been discovered, take my word for it, if Columbus had been nothing but nostrils. Friend Arrowhead, didst ever see a machine like this?"

The Indian turned, cast a glance at the compass, which Cap held in a way to direct his course, and gravely answered, "A pale-face eye. The Tuscarora see in his head. The Salt-water (for so the Indian styled his companion) all eye now; no tongue."

"He means, uncle, that we had needs be silent, perhaps he distrusts the persons we are about to meet."

"Ay, 'tis an Indian's fashion of going to quarters. You perceive he has examined the priming of his rifle, and it may be as well if I look to that of my own pistols."

Without betraying alarm at these preparations, to which she had become accustomed by her long journey in the wilderness, Mabel followed with a step as elastic as that of the Indian, keeping close in the rear of her companions. For the first half mile no other caution beyond a rigid silence was observed; but as the party drew nearer to the spot where the fire was known to be, much greater care became necessary.

The forest, as usual, had little to intercept the view below the branches but the tall straight trunks of trees. Everything belonging to vegetation had struggled towards the light, and beneath the leafy canopy one walked, as it might be, through a vast natural vault, upheld by myriads of rustic columns. These columns or trees, however, often served to conceal the adventurer, the hunter, or the foe; and, as Arrowhead swiftly approached the spot where his practised and unerring senses told him the strangers ought to be, his footstep gradually became lighter, his eye more vigilant, and his person was more carefully concealed.

"See, Saltwater," said he exulting, pointing through the vista of trees; "pale-face fire!"

"By the Lord, the fellow is right!" muttered Cap; "there they are, sure enough, and eating their grub as quietly as if they were in the cabin of a three-decker."

"Arrowhead is but half right!" whispered Mabel, "for there are two Indians and only one white man."

"Pale-faces," said the Tuscarora, holding up two fingers; "red man," holding up one.

"Well," rejoined Cap, "it is hard to say which is right and which is wrong. One is entirely white, and a fine comely lad he is, with an air of respectability about him; one is a red-skin as plain as paint and nature can make him; but the third chap is half-rigged, being neither brig nor schooner."

"Pale-faces," repeated Arrowhead, again raising two fingers, "red man," showing but one.

"He must be right, uncle; for his eye seems never to fail. But it is now urgent to know whether we meet as friends or foes. They may be French."

"One hail will soon satisfy us on that head," returned Cap. "Stand you behind the tree, Magnet, lest the knaves take it into their heads to fire a broadside without a parley, and I will soon learn what colors they sail under."

The uncle had placed his two hands to his mouth to form a trumpet, and was about to give the promised hail, when a rapid movement from the hand of Arrowhead defeated the intention by deranging the instrument.

"Red man, Mohican," said the Tuscarora; "good; pale-faces, Yengeese."

"These are heavenly tidings," murmured Mabel, who little relished the prospect of a deadly fray in that remote wilderness. "Let us approach at once, dear uncle, and proclaim ourselves friends."

"Good," said the Tuscarora "red man cool, and know; pale-face hurried, and fire. Let the squaw go."

"What!" said Cap in astonishment; "send little Magnet ahead as a lookout, while two lubbers, like you and me, lie-to to see what sort of a landfall she will make! If I do, I—"

"It is wisest, uncle," interrupted the generous girl, "and I have no fear. No Christian, seeing a woman approach alone, would fire upon her; and my presence will be a pledge of peace. Let me go forward, as Arrowhead wishes, and all will be well. We are, as yet, unseen, and the surprise of the strangers will not partake of alarm."

"Good," returned Arrowhead, who did not conceal his approbation of Mabel's spirit.

"It has an unseaman-like look," answered Cap; "but, being in the woods, no one will know it. If you think, Mabel —"

"Uncle, I know. There is no cause to fear for me; and you are always nigh to protect me."

"Well, take one of the pistols, then —"

"Nay, I had better rely on my youth and feebleness," said the girl, smiling, while her color heightened under her feelings. "Among Christian men, a woman's best guard is her claim to their protection. I know nothing of arms, and wish to live in ignorance of them."

The uncle desisted; and, after receiving a few cautious instructions from the Tuscarora, Mabel rallied all her spirit, and advanced alone towards the group seated near the fire. Although the heart of the girl beat quick, her step was firm, and her movements, seemingly, were without reluctance. A death-like silence reigned in the forest, for they towards whom she approached were too much occupied in appeasing their hunger to avert their looks for an instant from the important business in which they were all engaged. When Mabel, however, had got within a hundred feet of the fire, she trod upon a dried stick, and the trifling noise produced by her light footstep caused the Mohican, as Arrowhead had pronounced the Indian to be, and his companion, whose character had been thought so equivocal, to rise to their feet, as quick as thought. Both glanced at the rifles that leaned against a tree; and then each stood without stretching out an arm, as his eyes fell on the form of the girl. The Indian uttered a few words to his companion, and resumed his seat and his meal as calmly as if no interruption had occurred. On the contrary, the white man left the fire, and came forward to meet Mabel.

The latter saw, as the stranger approached that she was about to be addressed by one of her own color, though his dress was so strange a mixture of the habits of the two races, that it required a near look to be certain of the fact. He was of middle age; but there was an open honesty, a total absence of guile, in his face, which otherwise would not have been thought handsome, that at once assured Magnet she was in no danger. Still she paused.

"Fear nothing, young woman," said the hunter, for such his attire would indicate him to be; "you have met Christian men in the wilderness, and such as know how to treat all kindly who are disposed to peace and justice. I am a man well



known in all these parts, and perhaps one of my names may have reached your ears. By the Frenchers and the red-skins on the other side of the Big Lakes, I am called La Longue Carabine; by the Mohicans, a just-minded and upright tribe, what is left of them, Hawk Eye; while the troops and rangers along this side of the water call me Pathfinder, inasmuch as I have never been known to miss one end of the trail, when there was a Mingo, or a friend who stood in need of me, at the other."

This was not uttered boastfully, but with the honest confidence of one who well knew that by whatever name others might have heard of him, who had no reason to blush at the reports. The effect on Mabel was instantaneous. The moment she heard the last *sobriquet* she clasped her hands eagerly and repeated the word "Pathfinder!"

"So they call me, young woman, and many a great lord has got a title that he did not half so well merit; though, if truth be said, I rather pride myself in finding my way where there is no path, than in finding it where there is. But the regular troops are by no means particular, and half the time they don't know the difference between a trail and a path, though one is a matter for the eye, while the other is little more than scent."

"Then you are the friend my father promised to send to meet us?"

"If you are Sergeant Dunham's daughter, the great Prophet of the Delawares never uttered more truth."

"I am Mabel; and yonder, hid by the trees, are my uncle, whose name is Cap, and a Tuscarora called Arrowhead. We did not hope to meet you until we had nearly reached the shores of the lake."

"I wish a juster-minded Indian had been your guide," said Pathfinder; "for I am no lover of the Tuscaroras, who have travelled too far from the graves of their fathers always to remember the Great Spirit; and Arrowhead is an ambitious chief. Is the Dew-of-June with him?"

"His wife accompanies us, and a humble and mild creature she is."

"Ay, and true-hearted; which is more than any who know him will say of Arrowhead. Well, we must take the fare that Providence bestows, while we follow the trail of life. I suppose worse guides might have been found than the Tuscarora; though he has too much Mingo blood for one who consorts altogether with the Delawares."

"It is, then, perhaps, fortunate we have met," said Mabel.

"It is not misfortunate, at any rate; for I promised the Sergeant I would see his child safe to the garrison, though I died for it. We expected to meet you before you reached the Falls, where we have left our own canoe; while we thought it might do no harm to come up a few miles, in order to be of service if wanted. It is lucky we did, for I doubt if Arrowhead be the man to shoot the current."

"Here come my uncle and the Tuscarora, and our parties can now join." As Mabel concluded, Cap and Arrowhead, who saw that the conference was amicable, drew nigh; and a few words sufficed to let them know as much as the girl herself had learned from the strangers. As soon as this was done, the party proceeded towards the two who still remained near the fire.



## CHAPTER 2.

*Yea! long as Nature's humblest child  
Hath kept her temple undefiled  
By simple sacrifice,  
Earth's fairest scenes are all his own,  
He is a monarch and his throne  
Is built amid the skies!*

—WILSON.

The Mohican continued to eat, though the second white man rose, and courteously took off his cap to Mabel Dunham. He was young, healthful, and manly in appearance; and he wore a dress which, while it was less rigidly professional than that of the uncle, also denoted one accustomed to the water. In that age, real seamen were a class entirely apart from the rest of mankind, their ideas, ordinary language, and attire being as strongly indicative of their calling as the opinions, speech, and dress of a Turk denote a Mussulman. Although the Pathfinder was scarcely in the prime of life, Mabel had met him with a steadiness that may have been the consequence of having braced her nerves for the interview; but when her eyes encountered those of the young man at the fire, they fell before the gaze of admiration with which she saw, or fancied she saw, he greeted her. Each, in truth, felt that interest in the other which similarity of age, condition, mutual comeliness, and their novel situation would be likely to inspire in the young and ingenuous.

"Here," said Pathfinder, with an honest smile bestowed on Mabel, "are the friends your worthy father has sent to meet you. This is a great Delaware; and one who has had honors as well as troubles in his day. He has an Indian name fit for a chief, but, as the language is not always easy for the inexperienced to pronounce we naturally turn it into English, and call him the Big Serpent. You are not to suppose, however, that by this name we wish to say that he is treacherous, beyond what is lawful in a red-skin; but that he is wise, and has the cunning which becomes a warrior. Arrowhead, there, knows what I mean."

While the Pathfinder was delivering this address, the two Indians gazed on each other steadily, and the Tuscarora advanced and spoke to the other in an apparently friendly manner.

"I like to see this," continued Pathfinder; "the salutes of two red-skins in the woods, Master Cap, are like the hailing of friendly vessels on the ocean. But speaking of water, it reminds me of my young friend, Jasper Western here, who can claim to know something of these matters, seeing that he has passed his days on Ontario."

"I am glad to see you, friend," said Cap, giving the young fresh-water sailor a cordial grip; "though you must have something still to learn, considering the school to which you have been sent. This is my niece Mabel; I call her Magnet, for a reason she never dreams of, though you may possibly have education enough to guess at it, having some pretensions to understand the compass, I suppose."

"The reason is easily comprehended," said the young man, involuntarily fastening his keen dark eye, at the same time, on the suffused face of the girl; "and I feel sure that the sailor who steers by your Magnet will never make a bad landfall."

"Ha! you do make use of some of the terms, I find, and that with propriety; though, on the whole, I fear you have seen more green than blue water."

"It is not surprising that we should get some of the phrases which belong to the land; for we are seldom out of sight of it twenty-four hours at a time."

"More's the pity, boy, more's the pity! A very little land ought to go a great way with a seafaring man. Now, if the truth were known, Master Western, I suppose there is more or less land all round your lake."

"And, uncle, is there not more or less land around the ocean?" said Magnet quickly; for she dreaded a premature display of the old seaman's peculiar dogmatism, not to say pedantry.

"No, child, there is more or less ocean all round the land; that's what I tell the people ashore, youngster. They are living, as it might be, in the midst of the sea, without knowing it; by sufferance, as it were, the water being so much the more powerful and the largest. But there is no end to conceit in this world: for a fellow who never saw salt water often fancies he knows more than one who has gone round the Horn. No, no, this earth is pretty much an island; and all that can be truly said not to be so is water."

Young Western had a profound deference for a mariner of the ocean, on which he had often pined to sail; but he had also a natural regard for the broad sheet on which he had passed his life, and which was not without its beauties in his eyes.

"What you say, sir," he answered modestly, "may be true as to the Atlantic; but we have a respect for the land up here on Ontario."

"That is because you are always land-locked," returned Cap, laughing heartily; "but yonder is the Pathfinder, as they call him, with some smoking platters, inviting us to share in his mess; and I will confess that one gets no venison at sea. Master Western, civility to girls, at your time of life, comes as easy as taking in the slack of the ensign halyards; and if you will just keep an eye to her kid and can, while I join the mess of the Pathfinder and our Indian friends, I make no doubt she will remember it."

Master Cap uttered more than he was aware of at the time. Jasper Western did attend to the wants of Mabel, and she long remembered the kind, manly attention of the young sailor at this their first interview. He placed the end of a log for a seat, obtained for her a delicious morsel of the venison, gave her a draught of pure water from the spring, and as he sat near her, fast won his way to her esteem by his gentle but frank manner of manifesting his care; homage that woman always wishes to receive, but which is never so flattering or so agreeable as when it comes from the young to those of their own age — from the manly to the gentle. Like most of those who pass their time excluded from the society of the softer sex, young Western was earnest, sincere, and kind in his attentions, which, though they wanted a conventional refinement, which, perhaps, Mabel never missed, had those winning qualities that prove very sufficient as substitutes. Leaving these two unsophisticated young people to become acquainted through their feelings, rather than their expressed thoughts, we will turn to the group in which the uncle had already become a principal actor.

The party had taken their places around a platter of venison steaks, which served for the common use, and the discourse naturally partook of the characters of the different individuals which composed it. The Indians were silent and industrious the appetite of the aboriginal American for venison being seemingly inappeasable, while the two white men were communicative, each of the latter being garrulous and opinionated in his way. But, as the dialogue will put the reader in possession of certain facts that may render the succeeding narrative more clear, it will be well to record it.

"There must be satisfaction in this life of yours, no doubt, Mr. Pathfinder," continued Cap, when the hunger of the travellers was so far appeased that they began to pick and choose among the savory morsels; "it has some of the chances and luck that we seamen like; and if ours is all water, yours is all land."

"Nay, we have water too, in our journeyings and marches," returned his white companion; "we bordermen handle the paddle and the spear almost as much as the rifle and the hunting-knife."

"Ay; but do you handle the brace and the bow-line, the wheel and the lead-line, the reef-point and the top-rope? The paddle is a good thing, out of doubt, in a canoe; but of what use is it in the ship?"

"Nay, I respect all men in their callings, and I can believe the things you mention have their uses. One who has lived, like myself, in company with many tribes, understands differences in usages. The paint of a Mingo is not the paint of a Delaware; and he who should expect to see a warrior in the dress of a squaw might be disappointed. I am not yet very old, but I have lived in the woods, and have some acquaintance with human nature. I never believe much in the learning of them that dwell in towns, for I never yet met with one that had an eye for a rifle or a trail."

"That's my manner of reasoning, Master Pathfinder, to a yarn. Walking about streets, going to church of Sundays, and hearing sermons, never yet made a man of a human being. Send the boy out upon the broad ocean, if you wish to open his eyes, and let him look upon foreign nations, or what I call the face of nature, if you wish him to understand his own character. Now, there is my brother-in-law, the Sergeant: he is as good a fellow as ever broke a biscuit, in his way; but what is he, after all? Why, nothing but a soldier. A sergeant, to be sure, but that is a sort of a soldier, you know. When he wished to marry poor Bridget, my sister, I told the girl what he was, as in duty bound, and what she might expect from such a husband; but you know how it is with girls when their minds are jammed by an inclination. It is true, the Sergeant has risen in his calling, and they say he is an important man at the fort; but his poor wife has not lived to see it all, for she has now been dead these fourteen years."

"A soldier's calling is honorable, provided he has fi't only on the side of right," returned the Pathfinder; "and as the Frenchers are always wrong, and his sacred Majesty and these colonies are always right, I take it the Sergeant has a quiet conscience as well as a good character. I have never slept more sweetly than when I have fi't the Mingos, though it is the

law with me to fight always like a white man and never like an Indian. The Sarpent, here, has his fashions, and I have mine; and yet have we fi't side by side these many years; without either thinking a hard thought consarning the other's ways. I tell him there is but one heaven and one hell, notwithstanding his traditions, though there are many paths to both."

"That is rational; and he is bound to believe you, though, I fancy, most of the roads to the last are on dry land. The sea is what my poor sister Bridget used to call a 'purifying place,' and one is out of the way of temptation when out of sight of land. I doubt if as much can be said in favor of your lakes up hereaway."

"That towns and settlements lead to sin, I will allow; but our lakes are bordered by the forests, and one is every day called upon to worship God in such a temple. That men are not always the same, even in the wilderness, I must admit for the difference between a Mingo and a Delaware is as plain to be seen as the difference between the sun and the moon. I am glad, friend Cap, that we have met, however, if it be only that you may tell the Big Sarpent here that there are lakes in which the water is salt. We have been pretty much of one mind since our acquaintance began, and if the Mohican has only half the faith in me that I have in him, he believes all that I have told him touching the white men's ways and natur's laws; but it has always seemed to me that none of the red-skins have given as free a belief as an honest man likes to the accounts of the Big Salt Lakes, and to that of their being rivers that flow up stream."

"This comes of getting things wrong end foremost," answered Cap, with a condescending nod. "You have thought of your lakes and rifts as the ship; and of the ocean and the tides as the boat. Neither Arrowhead nor the Serpent need doubt what you have said concerning both, though I confess myself to some difficulty in swallowing the tale about there being inland seas at all, and still more that there is any sea of fresh water. I have come this long journey as much to satisfy my own eyes concerning these facts, as to oblige the Sergeant and Magnet, though the first was my sister's husband, and I love the last like a child."

"You are wrong, friend Cap, very wrong, to distrust the power of God in any thing," returned Pathfinder earnestly. "They that live in the settlements and the towns have confined and unjust opinions consarning the might of His hand; but we, who pass our time in His very presence, as it might be, see things differently — I mean, such of us as have white natur's. A red-skin has his notions, and it is right that it should be so; and if they are not exactly the same as a Christian white man's, there is no harm in it. Still, there are matters which belong altogether to the ordering of God's providence; and these salt and fresh-water lakes are some of them. I do not pretend to account for these things, but I think it the duty of all to believe in them."

"Hold on there, Master Pathfinder," interrupted Cap, not without some heat; "in the way of a proper and manly faith, I will turn my back on no one, when afloat. Although more accustomed to make all snug aloft, and to show the proper canvas, than to pray when the hurricane comes, I know that we are but helpless mortals at times, and I hope I pay reverence where reverence is due. All I mean to say is this: that, being accustomed to see water in large bodies salt, I should like to taste it before I can believe it to be fresh."

"God has given the salt lick to the deer; and He has given to man, red-skin and white, the delicious spring at which to slake his thirst. It is unreasonable to think that He may not have given lakes of pure water to the west, and lakes of impure water to the east."

Cap was awed, in spite of his overweening dogmatism, by the earnest simplicity of the Pathfinder, though he did not relish the idea of believing a fact which, for many years, he had pertinaciously insisted could not be true. Unwilling to give up the point and, at the same time, unable to maintain it against a reasoning to which he was unaccustomed, and which possessed equally the force of truth, faith, and probability, he was glad to get rid of the subject by evasion.

"Well, well, friend Pathfinder," said he, "we will leave the argument where it is; and we can try the water when we once reach it. Only mark my words — I do not say that it may not be fresh on the surface; the Atlantic is sometimes fresh on the surface, near the mouths of great rivers; but, rely on it, I shall show you a way of tasting the water many fathoms deep, of which you never dreamed; and then we shall know more about it."

The guide seemed content to let the matter rest, and the conversation changed.

"We are not over-conceited consarning our gifts," observed the Pathfinder, after a short pause, "and well know that such as live in the towns, and near the sea —"

"On the sea," interrupted Cap.

"On the sea, if you wish it, friend — have opportunities which do not befall us of the wilderness. Still, we know our own

callings, and they are what I consider natural callings, and are not parverted by vanity and wantonness. Now, my gifts are with the rifle, and on a trail, and in the way of game and scouting; for, though I can use the spear and the paddle, I pride not myself on either. The youth Jasper, there, who is discoursing with the Sergeant's daughter, is a different cratur'; for he may be said to breathe the water, as it might be, like a fish. The Indians and Frenchers of the north shore call him Eau-douce, on account of his gifts in this particular. He is better at the oar, and the rope too, than in making fires on a trail."

"There must be something about these gifts of which you speak, after all," said Cap. "Now this fire, I will acknowledge, has overlaid all my seamanship. Arrowhead, there, said the smoke came from a pale-face's fire, and that is a piece of philosophy which I hold to be equal to steering in a dark night by the edges of the sand."

"It's no great secret," returned Pathfinder, laughing with great inward glee, though habitual caution prevented the emission of any noise. "Nothing is easier to us who pass our time in the great school of Providence than to learn its lessons. We should be as useless on a trail, or in carrying tidings through the wilderness, as so many woodchucks, did we not soon come to a knowledge of these niceties. Eau-douce, as we call him, is so fond of the water, that he gathered a damp stick or two for our fire; and wet will bring dark smoke, as I suppose even you followers of the sea must know. It's no great secret, though all is mystery to such as doesn't study the Lord and His mighty ways with humility and thankfulness."

"That must be a keen eye of Arrowhead's to see so slight a difference."

"He would be but a poor Indian if he didn't. No, no; it is war-time, and no red-skin is outlying without using his senses. Every skin has its own natur', and every natur' has its own laws, as well as its own skin. It was many years before I could master all these higher branches of a forest education; for red-skin knowledge doesn't come as easy to white-skin natur', as what I suppose is intended to be white-skin knowledge; though I have but little of the latter, having passed most of my time in the wilderness."

"You have been a ready scholar, Master Pathfinder, as is seen by your understanding these things so well. I suppose it would be no great matter for a man regularly brought up to the sea to catch these trifles, if he could only bring his mind fairly to bear upon them."

"I don't know that. The white man has his difficulties in getting red-skin habits, quite as much as the Indian in getting white-skin ways. As for the real natur', it is my opinion that neither can actually get that of the other."

"And yet we sailors, who run about the world so much, say there is but one nature, whether it be in the Chinaman or a Dutchman. For my own part, I am much of that way of thinking too; for I have generally found that all nations like gold and silver, and most men relish tobacco."

"Then you seafaring men know little of the red-skins. Have you ever known any of your Chinamen who could sing their death-songs, with their flesh torn with splinters and cut with knives, the fire raging around their naked bodies, and death staring them in the face? Until you can find me a Chinaman, or a Christian man, that can do all this, you cannot find a man with a red-skin natur', let him look ever so valiant, or know how to read all the books that were ever printed."

"It is the savages only that play each other such hellish tricks," said Master Cap, glancing his eyes about him uneasily at the apparently endless arches of the forest. "No white man is ever condemned to undergo these trials."

"Nay, therein you are again mistaken," returned the Pathfinder, coolly selecting a delicate morsel of the venison as his *bonne bouche*; "for though these torments belong only to the red-skin natur', in the way of bearing them like braves, white-skin natur' may be, and often has been, agonized by them."

"Happily," said Cap, with an effort to clear his throat, "none of his Majesty's allies will be likely to attempt such damnable cruelties on any of his Majesty's loyal subjects. I have not served much in the royal navy, it is true; but I have served, and that is something; and, in the way of privateering and worrying the enemy in his ships and cargoes, I've done my full share. But I trust there are no French savages on this side the lake, and I think you said that Ontario is a broad sheet of water?"

"Nay, it is broad in our eyes," returned Pathfinder, not caring to conceal the smile which lighted a face which had been burnt by exposure to a bright red; "though I mistrust that some may think it narrow; and narrow it is, if you wish it to keep off the foe. Ontario has two ends, and the enemy that is afraid to cross it will be certain to come round it."

"Ah! that comes of your d — d fresh-water ponds!" growled Cap, hemming so loudly as to cause him instantly to repent the indiscretion. "No man, now, ever heard of a pirate or a ship getting round one end of the Atlantic!"

"Mayhap the ocean has no ends?"

"That it hasn't; nor sides, nor bottom. The nation which is snugly moored on one of its coasts need fear nothing from the one anchored abeam, let it be ever so savage, unless it possesses the art of ship building. No, no! the people who live on the shores of the Atlantic need fear but little for their skins or their scalps. A man may lie down at night in those regions, in the hope of finding the hair on his head in the morning, unless he wears a wig."

"It isn't so here. I don't wish to flurry the young woman, and therefore I will be in no way particular, though she seems pretty much listening to Eau-douce, as we call him; but without the education I have received, I should think it at this very moment, a risky journey to go over the very ground that lies between us and the garrison, in the present state of this frontier. There are about as many Iroquois on this side of Ontario as there are on the other. It is for this very reason, friend Cap, that the Sergeant has engaged us to come out and show you the path."

"What! do the knaves dare to cruise so near the guns of one of his Majesty's works?"

"Do not the ravens resort near the carcass of the deer, though the fowler is at hand? They come this-a-way, as it might be, naturally. There are more or less whites passing between the forts and the settlements, and they are sure to be on their trails. The Serpent has come up one side of the river, and I have come up the other, in order to scout for the outlying rascals, while Jasper brought up the canoe, like a bold-hearted sailor as he is. The Sergeant told him, with tears in his eyes, all about his child, and how his heart yearned for her, and how gentle and obedient she was, until I think the lad would have dashed into a Mingo camp single-handed, rather than not a-come."

"We thank him, and shall think the better of him for his readiness; though I suppose the boy has run no great risk, after all."

"Only the risk of being shot from a cover, as he forced the canoe up a swift rift, or turned an elbow in the stream, with his eyes fastened on the eddies. Of all the risky journeys, that on an ambushed river is the most risky, in my judgment, and that risk has Jasper run."

"And why the devil has the Sergeant sent for me to travel a hundred and fifty miles in this outlandish manner? Give me an offing, and the enemy in sight, and I'll play with him in his own fashion, as long as he pleases, long bows or close quarters; but to be shot like a turtle asleep is not to my humor. If it were not for little Magnet there, I would tack ship this instant, make the best of my way back to York, and let Ontario take care of itself, salt water or fresh water."

"That wouldn't mend the matter much, friend mariner, as the road to return is much longer, and almost as bad as the road to go on. Trust to us, and we will carry you through safely, or lose our scalps."

Cap wore a tight solid queue, done up in eelskin, while the top of his head was nearly bald; and he mechanically passed his hand over both as if to make certain that each was in its right place. He was at the bottom, however, a brave man, and had often faced death with coolness, though never in the frightful forms in which it presented itself under the brief but graphic picture of his companion. It was too late to retreat; and he determined to put the best face on the matter, though he could not avoid muttering inwardly a few curses on the indiscretion with which his brother-in-law, the Sergeant, had led him into his present dilemma.

"I make no doubt, Master Pathfinder," he answered, when these thoughts had found time to glance through his mind, "that we shall reach port in safety. What distance may we now be from the fort?"

"Little more than fifteen miles; and swift miles too, as the river runs, if the Mingos let us go clear."

"And I suppose the woods will stretch along starboard and larboard, as heretofore?"

"Anan?"

"I mean that we shall have to pick our way through these damned trees."

"Nay, nay, you will go in the canoe, and the Oswego has been cleared of its flood-wood by the troops. It will be floating down stream, and that, too, with a swift current."

"And what the devil is to prevent these minks of which you speak from shooting us as we double a headland, or are busy in steering clear of the rocks?"

"The Lord! — He who has so often helped others in greater difficulties. Many and many is the time that my head would have been stripped of hair, skin, and all, hadn't the Lord fi't of my side. I never go into a skrimmage, friend mariner, without thinking of this great ally, who can do more in battle than all the battalions of the 60th, were they brought into a single line."

"Ay, ay, this may do well enough for a scout; but we seamen like our offing, and to go into action with nothing in our minds but the business before us — plain broadside and broadside work, and no trees or rocks to thicken the water."

"And no Lord too, I dare to say, if the truth were known. Take my word for it, Master Cap, that no battle is the worse fi't for having the Lord on your side. Look at the head of the Big Serpent, there; you can see the mark of a knife all along by his left ear: now nothing but a bullet from this long rifle of mine saved his scalp that day; for it had fairly started, and half a minute more would have left him without the war-lock. When the Mohican squeezes my hand, and intimates that I befriended him in that matter, I tell him no; it was the Lord who led me to the only spot where execution could be done, or his necessity be made known, on account of the smoke. Sartain, when I got the right position, I finished the affair of my own accord. For a friend under the tomahawk is apt to make a man think quick and act at once, as was my case, or the Serpent's spirit would be hunting in the happy land of his people at this very moment."

"Come, come, Pathfinder, this palaver is worse than being skinned from stem to stem; we have but a few hours of sun, and had better be drifting down this said current of yours while we may. Magnet dear, are you not ready to get under way?"

Magnet started, blushed brightly, and made her preparations for immediate departure. Not a syllable of the discourse just related had she heard; for Eau-douce, as young Jasper was oftener called than anything else, had been filling her ears with a description of the yet distant part towards which she was journeying, with accounts of her father, whom she had not seen since a child, and with the manner of life of those who lived in the frontier garrisons. Unconsciously she had become deeply interested, and her thoughts had been too intently directed to these matters to allow any of the less agreeable subjects discussed by those so near to reach her ears. The bustle of departure put an end to the conversation, and, the baggage of the scouts or guides being trifling, in a few minutes the whole party was ready to proceed. As they were about to quit the spot, however, to the surprise of even his fellow-guides, Pathfinder collected a quantity of branches and threw them upon the embers of the fire, taking care even to see that some of the wood was damp, in order to raise as dark and dense a smoke as possible.

"When you can hide your trail, Jasper," said he, "a smoke at leaving an encampment may do good instead of harm. If there are a dozen Mingos within ten miles of us, some of 'em are on the heights, or in the trees, looking out for smokes; let them see this, and much good may it do them. They are welcome to our leavings."

"But may they not strike and follow on our trail?" asked the youth, whose interest in the hazard of his situation had much increased since the meeting with Magnet. "We shall leave a broad path to the river."

"The broader the better; when there, it will surpass Mingo cunning, even, to say which way the canoe has gone — up stream or down. Water is the only thing in nature that will thoroughly wash out a trail, and even water will not always do it when the scent is strong. Do you not see, Eau-douce, that if any Mingos have seen our path below the falls, they will strike off towards this smoke, and that they will naturally conclude that they who began by going up stream will end by going up stream. If they know anything, they now know a party is out from the fort, and it will exceed even Mingo wit to fancy that we have come up here just for the pleasure of going back again, and that, too, the same day, and at the risk of our scalps."

"Certainly," added Jasper, who was talking apart with the Pathfinder, as they moved towards the wind-row, "they cannot know anything about the Sergeant's daughter, for the greatest secrecy has been observed on her account."

"And they will learn nothing here," returned Pathfinder, causing his companion to see that he trod with the utmost care on the impression left on the leaves by the little foot of Mabel; "unless this old salt-water fish has been taking his niece about in the wind-row, like a fa'n playing by the side of the old doe."

"Buck, you mean, Pathfinder."

"Isn't he a queerity? Now I can consort with such a sailor as yourself, Eau-douce, and find nothing very contrary in our gifts, though yours belong to the lakes and mine to the woods. Hark'e, Jasper," continued the scout, laughing in his noiseless manner; "suppose we try the temper of his blade and run him over the falls?"

"And what would be done with the pretty niece in the meanwhile?"

"Nay, nay, no harm shall come to her; she must walk round the portage, at any rate; but you and I can try this Atlantic oceaner, and then all parties will become better acquainted. We shall find out whether his flint will strike fire; and he may come to know something of frontier tricks."

Young Jasper smiled, for he was not averse to fun, and had been a little touched by Cap's superciliousness; but Mabel's fair face, light, agile form, and winning smiles, stood like a shield between her uncle and the intended experiment.

“Perhaps the Sergeant’s daughter will be frightened,” said he.

“Not she, if she has any of the Sergeant’s spirit in her. She doesn’t look like a skeary thing, at all. Leave it to me, then, Eau-douce, and I will manage the affair alone.”

“Not you, Pathfinder; you would only drown both. If the canoe goes over, I must go in it.”

“Well, have it so, then: shall we smoke the pipe of agreement on the bargain?”

Jasper laughed, nodded his head by way of consent, and then the subject was dropped, as the party had reached the canoe so often mentioned, and fewer words had determined much greater things between the parties.





## CHAPTER 3.

*Before these fields were shorn and till'd,  
Full to the brim our rivers flow'd;  
The melody of waters fill'd  
The fresh and boundless wood;  
And torrents dash'd, and riuulets play'd,  
And fountains spouted in the shade.*

—BRYANT.

It is generally known that the waters which flow into the southern side of Ontario are, in general, narrow, sluggish, and deep. There are some exceptions to this rule, for many of the rivers have rapids, or, as they are termed in the language of the region, “rifts,” and some have falls. Among the latter was the particular stream on which our adventurers were now journeying. The Oswego is formed by the junction of the Oneida and the Onondaga, both of which flow from lakes; and it pursues its way, through a gently undulating country, some eight or ten miles, until it reaches the margin of a sort of natural terrace, down which it tumbles some ten or fifteen feet, to another level, across which it glides with the silent, stealthy progress of deep water, until it throws its tribute into the broad receptacle of the Ontario. The canoe in which Cap and his party had travelled from Fort Stanwix, the last military station of the Mohawk, lay by the side of this river, and into it the whole party now entered, with the exception of Pathfinder, who remained on the land, in order to shove the light vessel off.

“Let her starn drift down stream, Jasper,” said the man of the woods to the young mariner of the lake, who had dispossessed Arrowhead of his paddle and taken his own station as steersman; “let it go down with the current. Should any of these infarnals, the Mingos, strike our trail, or follow it to this point they will not fail to look for the signs in the mud; and if they discover that we have left the shore with the nose of the canoe up stream, it is a natural belief to think we went up stream.”

This direction was followed; and, giving a vigorous shove, the Pathfinder, who was in the flower of his strength and activity, made a leap, landing lightly, and without disturbing its equilibrium, in the bow of the canoe. As soon as it had reached the centre of the river or the strength of the current, the boat was turned, and it began to glide noiselessly down the stream.

The vessel in which Cap and his niece had embarked for their long and adventurous journey was one of the canoes of bark which the Indians are in the habit of constructing, and which, by their exceeding lightness and the ease with which they are propelled, are admirably adapted to a navigation in which shoals, flood-wood, and other similar obstructions so often occur. The two men who composed its original crew had several times carried it, when emptied of its luggage, many hundred yards; and it would not have exceeded the strength of a single man to lift its weight. Still it was long, and, for a canoe, wide; a want of steadiness being its principal defect in the eyes of the uninitiated. A few hours practice, however, in a great measure remedied this evil, and both Mabel and her uncle had learned so far to humor its movements, that they now maintained their places with perfect composure; nor did the additional weight of the three guides tax its power in any particular degree, the breath of the rounded bottom allowing the necessary quantity of water to be displaced without bringing the gunwale very sensibly nearer to the surface of the stream. Its workmanship was neat; the timbers were small, and secured by thongs; and the whole fabric, though it was so slight to the eye, was probably capable of conveying double the number of persons which it now contained.

Cap was seated on a low thwart, in the centre of the canoe; the Big Serpent knelt near him. Arrowhead and his wife occupied places forward of both, the former having relinquished his post aft. Mabel was half reclining behind her uncle, while the Pathfinder and Eau-douce stood erect, the one in the bow, and the other in the stern, each using a paddle, with a long, steady, noiseless sweep. The conversation was carried on in low tones, all the party beginning to feel the necessity of prudence, as they drew nearer to the outskirts of the fort, and had no longer the cover of the woods.

The Oswego, just at that place, was a deep dark stream of no great width, its still, gloomy-looking current winding its way among overhanging trees, which, in particular spots, almost shut out the light of the heavens. Here and there some half-fallen giant of the forest lay nearly across its surface, rendering care necessary to avoid the limbs; and most of the distance, the lower branches and leaves of the trees of smaller growth were laved by its waters. The picture so beautifully

described by our own admirable poet, and which we have placed at the head of this chapter, was here realized; the earth fattened by the decayed vegetation of centuries, and black with loam, the stream that filled the banks nearly to overflowing, and the “fresh and boundless wood,” being all as visible to the eye as the pen of Bryant has elsewhere vividly presented them to the imagination. In short, the entire scene was one of a rich and benevolent nature, before it had been subjected to the uses and desires of man; luxuriant, wild, full of promise, and not without the charm of the picturesque, even in its rudest state. It will be remembered that this was in the year 175-, or long before even speculation had brought any portion of western New York within the bounds of civilization. At that distant day there were two great channels of military communication between the inhabited portion of the colony of New York and the frontiers which lay adjacent to the Canadas — that by Lakes Champlain and George, and that by means of the Mohawk, Wood Creek, the Oneida, and the rivers we have been describing. Along both these lines of communication military posts had been established, though there existed a blank space of a hundred miles between the last fort at the head of the Mohawk and the outlet of the Oswego, which embraced most of the distance that Cap and Mabel had journeyed under the protection of Arrowhead.

“I sometimes wish for peace again,” said the Pathfinder, “when one can range the forest without searching for any other enemy than the beasts and fishes. Ah’s me! many is the day that the Serpent, there, and I have passed happily among the streams, living on venison, salmon, and trout without thought of a Mingo or a scalp! I sometimes wish that them blessed days might come back, for it is not my real gift to slay my own kind. I’m sartain the Sergeant’s daughter don’t think me a wretch that takes pleasure in preying on human natur’?”

As this remark, a sort of half interrogatory, was made, Pathfinder looked behind him; and, though the most partial friend could scarcely term his sunburnt and hard features handsome, even Mabel thought his smile attractive, by its simple ingenuousness and the uprightness that beamed in every lineament of his honest countenance.

“I do not think my father would have sent one like those you mention to see his daughter through the wilderness,” the young woman answered, returning the smile as frankly as it was given, but much more sweetly.

“That he wouldn’t; the Sergeant is a man of feeling, and many is the march and the fight that we have had — stood shoulder to shoulder in, as *he* would call it — though I always keep my limbs free when near a Frencher or a Mingo.”

“You are, then, the young friend of whom my father has spoken so often in his letters?”

“His *young* friend — the Sergeant has the advantage of me by thirty years; yes, he is thirty years my senior, and as many my better.”

“Not in the eyes of the daughter, perhaps, friend Pathfinder;” put in Cap, whose spirits began to revive when he found the water once more flowing around him. “The thirty years that you mention are not often thought to be an advantage in the eyes of girls of nineteen.”

Mabel colored; and, in turning aside her face to avoid the looks of those in the bow of the canoe, she encountered the admiring gaze of the young man in the stern. As a last resource, her spirited but soft blue eyes sought refuge in the water. Just at this moment a dull, heavy sound swept up the avenue formed by the trees, borne along by a light air that hardly produced a ripple on the water.

“That sounds pleasantly,” said Cap, pricking up his ears like a dog that hears a distant baying; “it is the surf on the shores of your lake, I suppose?”

“Not so — not so,” answered the Pathfinder; “it is merely this river tumbling over some rocks half a mile below us.”

“Is there a fall in the stream?” demanded Mabel, a still brighter flush glowing in her face.

“The devil! Master Pathfinder, or you, Mr. Eau-douce” (for so Cap began to style Jasper), “had you not better give the canoe a sheer, and get nearer to the shore? These waterfalls have generally rapids above them, and one might as well get into the Maelstrom at once as to run into their suction.”

“Trust to us, friend Cap,” answered Pathfinder; “we are but fresh-water sailors, it is true, and I cannot boast of being much even of that; but we understand rifts and rapids and cataracts; and in going down these we shall do our endeavors not to disgrace our edication.”

“In going down!” exclaimed Cap. “The devil, man! you do not dream of going down a waterfall in this egg shell of bark!”

“Sartain; the path lies over the falls, and it is much easier to shoot them than to unload the canoe and to carry that and all it contains around a portage of a mile by hand.”

Mabel turned her pallid countenance towards the young man in the stern of the canoe; for, just at that moment, a fresh roar of the fall was borne to her ears by a new current of the air, and it really sounded terrific, now that the cause was understood.

"We thought that, by landing the females and the two Indians," Jasper quietly observed, "we three white men, all of whom are used to the water, might carry the canoe over in safety, for we often shoot these falls."

"And we counted on you, friend mariner, as a mainstay," said Pathfinder, winking to Jasper over his shoulder; "for you are accustomed to see waves tumbling about; and without some one to steady the cargo, all the finery of the Sergeant's daughter might be washed into the river and be lost."

Cap was puzzled. The idea of going over a waterfall was, perhaps, more serious in his eyes than it would have been in those of one totally ignorant of all that pertained to boats; for he understood the power of the element, and the total feebleness of man when exposed to its fury. Still his pride revolted at the thought of deserting the boat, while others not only steadily, but coolly, proposed to continue in it. Notwithstanding the latter feeling, and his innate as well as acquired steadiness in danger, he would probably have deserted his post; had not the images of Indians tearing scalps from the human head taken so strong hold of his fancy as to induce him to imagine the canoe a sort of sanctuary.

"What is to be done with Magnet?" he demanded, affection for his niece raising another qualm in his conscience. "We cannot allow Magnet to land if there are enemy's Indians near?"

"Nay, no Mingo will be near the portage, for that is a spot too public for their devilries," answered the Pathfinder confidently. "Natur' is natur', and it is an Indian's natur' to be found where he is least expected. No fear of him on a beaten path; for he wishes to come upon you when unprepared to meet him, and the fiery villains make it a point to deceive you, one way or another. Sheer in, Eau-douce, and we will land the Sergeant's daughter on the end of that log, where she can reach the shore with a dry foot."

The injunction was obeyed, and in a few minutes the whole party had left the canoe, with the exception of Pathfinder and the two sailors. Notwithstanding his professional pride, Cap would have gladly followed; but he did not like to exhibit so unequivocal a weakness in the presence of a fresh-water sailor.

"I call all hands to witness," said he, as those who had landed moved away, "that I do not look on this affair as anything more than canoeing in the woods. There is no seamanship in tumbling over a waterfall, which is a feat the greatest lubber can perform as well as the oldest mariner."

"Nay, nay, you needn't despise the Oswego Falls, neither," put in Pathfinder; "for, though they may not be Niagara, nor the Genessee, nor the Cahoos, nor Glenn's, nor those on the Canada, they are narvous enough for a new beginner. Let the Sergeant's daughter stand on yonder rock, and she will see the manner in which we ignorant backwoodsmen get over a difficulty that we can't get under. Now, Eau-douce, a steady hand and a true eye, for all rests on you, seeing that we can count Master Cap for no more than a passenger."

The canoe was leaving the shore as he concluded, while Mabel went hurriedly and trembling to the rock that had been pointed out, talking to her companion of the danger her uncle so unnecessarily ran, while her eyes were riveted on the agile and vigorous form of Eau-douce, as he stood erect in the stern of the light boat, governing its movements. As soon, however, as she reached a point where she got a view of the fall, she gave an involuntary but suppressed scream, and covered her eyes. At the next instant, the latter were again free, and the entranced girl stood immovable as a statue, a scarcely breathing observer of all that passed. The two Indians seated themselves passively on a log, hardly looking towards the stream, while the wife of Arrowhead came near Mabel, and appeared to watch the motions of the canoe with some such interest as a child regards the leaps of a tumbler.

As soon as the boat was in the stream, Pathfinder sank on his knees, continuing to use the paddle, though it was slowly, and in a manner not to interfere with the efforts of his companion. The latter still stood erect; and, as he kept his eye on some object beyond the fall, it was evident that he was carefully looking for the spot proper for their passage.

"Farther west, boy; farther west," muttered Pathfinder; "there where you see the water foam. Bring the top of the dead oak in a line with the stem of the blasted hemlock."

Eau-douce made no answer; for the canoe was in the centre of the stream, with its head pointed towards the fall, and it had already begun to quicken its motion by the increased force of the current. At that moment Cap would cheerfully have renounced every claim to glory that could possibly be acquired by the feat, to have been safe again on shore. He heard the

roar of the water, thundering, as it might be, behind a screen, but becoming more and more distinct, louder and louder, and before him he saw its line cutting the forest below, along which the green and angry element seemed stretched and shining, as if the particles were about to lose their principle of cohesion.

“Down with your helm, down with your helm, man!” he exclaimed, unable any longer to suppress his anxiety, as the canoe glided towards the edge of the fall.

“Ay, ay, down it is sure enough,” answered Pathfinder, looking behind him for a single instant, with his silent, joyous laugh — “down we go, of a sartinty! Heave her starn up, boy; farther up with her starn!”

The rest was like the passage of the viewless wind. Eau-douce gave the required sweep with his paddle, the canoe glanced into the channel, and for a few seconds it seemed to Cap that he was tossing in a caldron. He felt the bow of the canoe tip, saw the raging, foaming water careering madly by his side, was sensible that the light fabric in which he floated was tossed about like an egg-shell, and then, not less to his great joy than to his surprise, he discovered that it was gliding across the basin of still water below the fall, under the steady impulse of Jasper’s paddle.

The Pathfinder continued to laugh; but he arose from his knees, and, searching for a tin pot and a horn spoon, he began deliberately to measure the water that had been taken in the passage.

“Fourteen spoonfuls, Eau-douce; fourteen fairly measured spoonfuls. I have, you must acknowledge, known you to go down with only ten.”

“Master Cap leaned so hard up stream,” returned Jasper seriously, “that I had difficulty in trimming the canoe.”

“It may be so; no doubt it *was* so, since you say it; but I have known you go over with only ten.”

Cap now gave a tremendous hem, felt for his queue as if to ascertain its safety, and then looked back in order to examine the danger he had gone through. His safety is easily explained. Most of the river fell perpendicularly ten or twelve feet; but near its centre the force of the current had so far worn away the rock as to permit the water to shoot through a narrow passage, at an angle of about forty or forty five degrees. Down this ticklish descent the canoe had glanced, amid fragments of broken rock, whirlpools, foam, and furious tossings of the element, which an uninstructed eye would believe menaced inevitable destruction to an object so fragile. But the very lightness of the canoe had favored its descent; for, borne on the crest of the waves, and directed by a steady eye and an arm full of muscle, it had passed like a feather from one pile of foam to another, scarcely permitting its glossy side to be wetted. There were a few rocks to be avoided, the proper direction was to be rigidly observed, and the fierce current did the rest. (1)

*(1) Lest the reader suppose we are dealing purely in fiction, the writer will add that he has known a long thirty-two pounder carried over these same falls in perfect safety.*

To say that Cap was astonished would not be expressing half his feelings; he felt awed: for the profound dread of rocks which most seamen entertain came in aid of his admiration of the boldness of the exploit. Still he was indisposed to express all he felt, lest it might be conceding too much in favor of fresh water and inland navigation; and no sooner had he cleared his throat with the afore-said hem, than he loosened his tongue in the usual strain of superiority.

“I do not gainsay your knowledge of the channel, Master Eau-douce, and, after all, to know the channel in such a place is the main point. I have had cockswains with me who could come down that shoot too, if they only knew the channel.”

“It isn’t enough to know the channel,” said Pathfinder; “it needs narves and skill to keep the canoe straight, and to keep her clear of the rocks too. There isn’t another boatman in all this region that can shoot the Oswego, but Eau-douce there, with any sartainty; though, now and then, one has blundered through. I can’t do it myself unless by means of Providence, and it needs Jasper’s hand and eye to make sure of a dry passage. Fourteen spoonfuls, after all, are no great matter, though I wish it had been but ten, seeing that the Sergeant’s daughter was a looker-on.”

“And yet you conned the canoe; you told him how to head and how to sheer.”

“Human frailty, master mariner; that was a little of white-skin natur’. Now, had the Sarpent, yonder, been in the boat, not a word would he have spoken, or thought would he have given to the public. An Indian knows how to hold his tongue; but we white folk fancy we are always wiser than our fellows. I’m curing myself fast of the weakness, but it needs time to root up the tree that has been growing more than thirty years.”

“I think little of this affair, sir; nothing at all to speak my mind freely. It’s a mere wash of spray to shooting London

Bridge which is done every day by hundreds of persons, and often by the most delicate ladies in the land. The king's majesty has shot the bridge in his royal person."

"Well, I want no delicate ladies or king's majesties (God bless 'em!) in the canoe, in going over these falls; for a boat's breadth, either way, may make a drowning matter of it. Eau-douce, we shall have to carry the Sergeant's brother over Niagara yet, to show him what may be done in a frontier."

"The devil! Master Pathfinder, you must be joking now! Surely it is not possible for a bark canoe to go over that mighty cataract?"

"You never were more mistaken, Master Cap, in your life. Nothing is easier and many is the canoe I have seen go over it with my own eyes; and if we both live I hope to satisfy you that the feat can be done. For my part, I think the largest ship that ever sailed on the ocean might be carried over, could she once get into the rapids."

Cap did not perceive the wink which Pathfinder exchanged with Eau-douce, and he remained silent for some time; for, sooth to say, he had never suspected the possibility of going down Niagara, feasible as the thing must appear to every one on a second thought, the real difficulty existing in going up it.

By this time the party had reached the place where Jasper had left his own canoe, concealed in the bushes, and they all re-embarked; Cap, Jasper, and his niece in one boat and Pathfinder, Arrowhead, and the wife of the latter in the other. The Mohican had already passed down the banks of the river by land, looking cautiously and with the skill of his people for the signs of an enemy.

The cheek of Mabel did not recover all its bloom until the canoe was again in the current, down which it floated swiftly, occasionally impelled by the paddle of Jasper. She witnessed the descent of the falls with a degree of terror which had rendered her mute; but her fright had not been so great as to prevent admiration of the steadiness of the youth who directed the movement from blending with the passing terror. In truth, one much less sensitive might have had her feelings awakened by the cool and gallant air with which Eau-douce had accomplished this clever exploit. He had stood firmly erect, notwithstanding the plunge; and to those on the shore it was evident that, by a timely application of his skill and strength, the canoe had received a sheer which alone carried it clear of a rock over which the boiling water was leaping in *jets d'eau* — now leaving the brown stone visible, and now covering it with a limpid sheet, as if machinery controlled the play of the element. The tongue cannot always express what the eyes view; but Mabel saw enough, even in that moment of fear, to blend for ever in her mind the pictures presented by the plunging canoe and the unmoved steersman. She admitted that insidious feeling which binds woman so strongly to man, by feeling additional security in finding herself under his care; and, for the first time since leaving Fort Stanwix, she was entirely at her ease in the frail bark in which she travelled. As the other canoe kept quite near her own, however, and the Pathfinder, by floating at her side, was most in view, the conversation was principally maintained with that person; Jasper seldom speaking unless addressed, and constantly exhibiting a wariness in the management of his own boat, which might have been remarked by one accustomed to his ordinarily confident, careless manner.

"We know too well a woman's gifts to think of carrying the Sergeant's daughter over the falls," said Pathfinder, looking at Mabel, while he addressed her uncle; "though I've been acquainted with some of her sex that would think but little of doing the thing."

"Mabel is faint-hearted, like her mother," returned Cap; "and you did well, friend, to humor her weakness. You will remember the child has never been at sea."

"No, no, it was easy to discover that; by your own fearlessness, any one might have seen how little you cared about the matter. I went over once with a raw hand, and he jumped out of the canoe just as it tipped, and you many judge what a time he had of it."

"What became of the poor fellow?" asked Cap, scarcely knowing how to take the other's manner, which was so dry, while it was so simple, that a less obtuse subject than the old sailor might well have suspected its sincerity. "One who has passed the place knows how to feel for him."

"He was a *poor* fellow, as you say; and a poor frontiersman too, though he came out to show his skill among us ignoranthers. What became of him? Why, he went down the falls topsy-turvy like, as would have happened to a court-house or a fort."

"If it should jump out of at canoe," interrupted Jasper, smiling, though he was evidently more disposed than his friend

to let the passage of the falls be forgotten.

“The boy is right,” rejoined Pathfinder, laughing in Mabel’s face, the canoes being now so near that they almost touched; “he is sartainly right. But you have not told us what you think of the leap we took?”

“It was perilous and bold,” said Mabel; “while looking at it, I could have wished that it had not been attempted, though, now it is over, I can admire its boldness and the steadiness with which it was made.”

“Now, do not think that we did this thing to set ourselves off in female eyes. It may be pleasant to the young to win each other’s good opinions by doing things which may seem praiseworthy and bold; but neither Eau-douce nor myself is of that race. My natur’ has few turns in it, and is a straight natur’; nor would it be likely to lead me into a vanity of this sort while out on duty. As for Jasper, he would sooner go over the Oswego Falls, without a looker-on, than do it before a hundred pair of eyes. I know the lad well from much consorting, and I am sure he is not boastful or vainglorious.”

Mabel rewarded the scout with a smile, which served to keep the canoes together for some time longer; for the sight of youth and beauty was so rare on that remote frontier, that even the rebuked and self-mortified feelings of this wanderer of the forest were sensibly touched by the blooming loveliness of the girl.

“We did it for the best,” Pathfinder continued; “twas all for the best. Had we waited to carry the canoe across the portage, time would have been lost, and nothing is so precious as time when you are mistrustful of Mingos.”

“But we have little to fear now. The canoes move swiftly, and two hours, you have said, will carry us down to the fort.”

“It shall be a cunning Iroquois who hurts a hair of your head, pretty one; for all here are bound to the Sergeant, and most, I think, to yourself, to see you safe from harm. Ha, Eau-douce! what is that in the river, at the lower turn, yonder, beneath the bushes — I mean standing on the rock?”

“Tis the Big Serpent, Pathfinder; he is making signs to us in a way I don’t understand.”

“Tis the Sarpent, as sure as I’m a white man, and he wishes us to drop in nearer to his shore. Mischief is brewing, or one of his deliberation and steadiness would never take this trouble. Courage, all! We are men, and must meet devilry as becomes our color and our callings. Ah, I never knew good come of boasting! And here, just as I was vaunting of our safety, comes danger to give me the lie.”

Chapter 4



## CHAPTER 4

*Art, stryving to compare  
With nature, did an arber greene dispred,  
Fram'd of wanton yvie flowing fayre,  
Through which the fragrant eglantines did spread.*

—SPENSER.

The Oswego, below the falls, is a more rapid, unequal stream than it is above them. There are places where the river flows in the quiet stillness of deep water, but many shoals and rapids occur; and at that distant day, when everything was in its natural state, some of the passes were not altogether without hazard. Very little exertion was required on the part of those who managed the canoes, except in those places where the swiftness of the current and the presence of the rocks required care; then, indeed, not only vigilance, but great coolness, readiness, and strength of arm became necessary, in order to avoid the dangers. Of all this the Mohican was aware, and he had judiciously selected a spot where the river flowed tranquilly to intercept the canoes, in order to make his communication without hazard to those he wished to speak.

The Pathfinder had no sooner recognized the form of his red friend, than, with a strong sweep of his paddle, he threw the head of his own canoe towards the shore, motioning for Jasper to follow. In a minute both boats were silently drifting down the stream, within reach of the bushes that overhung the water, all observing a profound silence; some from alarm, and others from habitual caution. As the travellers drew nearer the Indian, he made a sign for them to stop; and then he and Pathfinder had a short but earnest conference.

"The Chief is not apt to see enemies in a dead log," observed the white man to his red associate; "why does he tell us to stop?"

"Mingos are in the woods."

"That we have believed these two days: does the chief know it?"

The Mohican quietly held up the head of a pipe formed of stone.

"It lay on a fresh trail that led towards the garrison,"— for so it was the usage of that frontier to term a military work, whether it was occupied or not.

"That may be the bowl of a pipe belonging to a soldier. Many use the red-skin pipes."

"See," said the Big Serpent, again holding the thing he had found up to the view of his friend.

The bowl of the pipe was of soap-stone, and was carved with great care and with a very respectable degree of skill; in its centre was a small Latin cross, made with an accuracy which permitted no doubt of its meaning.

"That does foretell devilry and wickedness," said the Pathfinder, who had all the provincial horror of the holy symbol in question which then pervaded the country, and which became so incorporated with its prejudices, by confounding men with things, as to have left its traces strong enough on the moral feeling of the community to be discovered even at the present hour; "no Indian who had not been parverted by the cunning priests of the Canadas would dream of carving a thing like that on his pipe. I'll warrant ye, the knave prays to the image every time he wishes to sarcumvent the innocent, and work his fearful wickedness. It looks fresh, too, Chingachgook?"

"The tobacco was burning when I found it."

"That is close work, chief. Where was the trail?"

The Mohican pointed to a spot not a hundred yards from that where they stood.

The matter now began to look very serious, and the two principal guides conferred apart for several minutes, when both ascended the bank, approached the indicated spot, and examined the trail with the utmost care. After this investigation had lasted a quarter of an hour, the white man returned alone, his red friend having disappeared in the forest.

The ordinary expression of the countenance of the Pathfinder was that of simplicity, integrity, and sincerity, blended in an air of self-reliance which usually gave great confidence to those who found themselves under his care; but now a look of concern cast a shade over his honest face, that struck the whole party.

"What cheer, Master Pathfinder?" demanded Cap, permitting a voice that was usually deep, loud, and confident to

sink into the cautious tones that better suited the dangers of the wilderness. "Has the enemy got between us and our port?"

"Anan?"

"Have any of these painted scaramouches anchored off the harbor towards which we are running, with the hope of cutting us off in entering?"

"It may be all as you say, friend Cap, but I am none the wiser for your words; and in ticklish times the plainer a man makes his English the easier he is understood. I know nothing of ports and anchors; but there is a direful Mingo trail within a hundred yards of this very spot, and as fresh as venison without salt. If one of the fiery devils has passed, so have a dozen; and, what is worse, they have gone down towards the garrison, and not a soul crosses the clearing around it that some of their piercing eyes will not discover, when sartain bullets will follow."

"Cannot this said fort deliver a broadside, and clear everything within the sweep of its hawse?"

"Nay, the forts this-a-way are not like forts in the settlements, and two or three light cannon are all they have down at the mouth of the river; and then, broadsides fired at a dozen outlying Mingoes, lying behind logs and in a forest, would be powder spent in vain. We have but one course, and that is a very nice one. We are judgmatically placed here, both canoes being hid by the high bank and the bushes, from all eyes, except those of any lurker directly opposite. Here, then, we may stay without much present fear; but how to get the bloodthirsty devils up the stream again? Ha! I have it, I have it! if it does no good, it can do no harm. Do you see the wide-topped chestnut here, Jasper, at the last turn in the river — on our own side of the stream, I mean?"

"That near the fallen pine?"

"The very same. Take the flint and tinderbox, creep along the bank, and light a fire at that spot; maybe the smoke will draw them above us. In the meanwhile, we will drop the canoes carefully down beyond the point below, and find another shelter. Bushes are plenty, and covers are easily to be had in this region, as witness the many ambushments."

"I will do it, Pathfinder," said Jasper, springing to the shore. "In ten minutes the fire shall be lighted."

"And, Eau-douce, use plenty of damp wood this time," half whispered the other, laughing heartily, in his own peculiar manner; "when smoke is wanted, water helps to thicken it."

The young man was soon off, making his way rapidly towards the desired point. A slight attempt of Mabel to object to the risk was disregarded, and the party immediately prepared to change its position, as it could be seen from the place where Jasper intended to light his fire. The movement did not require haste, and it was made leisurely and with care. The canoes were got clear of the bushes, then suffered to drop down with the stream until they reached the spot where the chestnut, at the foot of which Jasper was to light the fire, was almost shut out from view, when they stopped, and every eye was turned in the direction of the adventurer.

"There goes the smoke!" exclaimed the Pathfinder, as a current of air whirled a little column of the vapor from the land, allowing it to rise spirally above the bed of the river. "A good flint, a small bit of steel, and plenty of dry leaves makes a quick fire. I hope Eau-douce will have the wit to bethink him of the damp wood now when it may serve us all a good turn."

"Too much smoke — too much cunning," said Arrowhead sententiously.

"That is gospel truth, Tuscarora, if the Mingoes didn't know that they are near soldiers; but soldiers commonly think more of their dinner at a halt than of their wisdom and danger. No, no; let the boy pile on his logs, and smoke them well too; it will all be laid to the stupidity of some Scotch or Irish blunderer, who is thinking more of his oatmeal or his potatoes than of Indian sarcumventions or Indian rifles."

"And yet I should think, from all we have heard in the towns, that the soldiers on this frontier are used to the artifices of their enemies," said Mabel, "and become almost as wily as the red men themselves."

"Not they. Experience makes them but little wiser; and they wheel, and platoon, and battalion it about, here in the forest, just as they did in their parks at home, of which they are all so fond of talking. One red-skin has more cunning in his natur' than a whole regiment from the other side of the water; that is, what I call cunning of the woods. But there is smoke enough, of all conscience, and we had better drop into another cover. The lad has thrown the river on his fire, and there is danger that the Mingoes will believe a whole regiment is out."

While speaking, the Pathfinder permitted his canoe to drift away from the bush by which it had been retained, and in a



couple of minutes the bend in the river concealed the smoke and the tree. Fortunately a small indentation in the shore presented itself, within a few yards of the point they had just passed; and the two canoes glided into it, under the impulsion of the paddles.

A better spot could not have been found for the purpose. The bushes were thick, and overhung the water, forming a complete canopy of leaves. There was a small gravelly strand at the bottom of the little bay, where most of the party landed to be more at their ease, and the only position from which they could possibly be seen was a point on the river directly opposite. There was little danger, however, of discovery from that quarter, as the thicket there was even denser than common, and the land beyond it was so wet and marshy as to render it difficult to be trodden.

"This is a safe cover," said the Pathfinder, after he had taken a scrutinizing survey of his position; "but it may be necessary to make it safer. Master Cap, I ask nothing of you but silence, and a quieting of such gifts as you may have got at sea, while the Tuscarora and I make provision for the evil hour."

The guide then went a short distance into the bushes, accompanied by the Indian, where the two cut off the larger stems of several alders and other bushes, using the utmost care not to make a noise. The ends of these little trees were forced into the mud, outside of the canoes, the depth of the water being very trifling; and in the course of ten minutes a very effectual screen was interposed between them and the principal point of danger. Much ingenuity and readiness were manifested in making this simple arrangement, in which the two workmen were essentially favored by the natural formation of the bank, the indentation in the shore, the shallowness of the water, and the manner in which the tangled bushes dipped into the stream. The Pathfinder had the address to look for bushes which had curved stems, things easily found in such a place; and by cutting them some distance beneath the bend, and permitting the latter to touch the water, the artificial little thicket had not the appearance of growing in the stream, which might have excited suspicion; but one passing it would have thought that the bushes shot out horizontally from the bank before they inclined upwards towards the light. In short, none but an unusually distrustful eye would have been turned for an instant towards the spot in quest of a hiding-place.

"This is the best cover I ever yet got into," said the Pathfinder, with his quiet laugh, after having been on the outside to reconnoitre; "the leaves of our new trees fairly touch those of the bushes over our heads. Hist! — yonder comes Eau-douce, wading, like a sensible boy, as he is, to leave his trail in the water; and we shall soon see whether our cover is good for anything or not."

Jasper had indeed returned from his duty above; and missing the canoes, he at once inferred that they had dropped round the next bend in the river, in order to get out of sight of the fire. His habits of caution immediately suggested the expediency of stepping into the water, in order that there might exist no visible communication between the marks left on the shore by the party and the place where he believed them to have taken refuge below. Should the Canadian Indians return on their own trail, and discover that made by the Pathfinder and the Serpent in their ascent from and descent to the river, the clue to their movements would cease at the shore, water leaving no prints of footsteps. The young man had therefore waded, knee-deep, as far as the point, and was now seen making his way slowly down the margin of the stream, searching curiously for the spot in which the canoes were hid.

It was in the power of those behind the bushes, by placing their eyes near the leaves, to find many places to look through while one at a little distance lost this advantage. To those who watched his motions from behind their cover, and they were all in the canoes, it was evident that Jasper was totally at a loss to imagine where the Pathfinder had secreted himself. When fairly round the curvature in the shore, and out of sight of the fire he had lighted above, the young man stopped and began examining the bank deliberately and with great care. Occasionally he advanced eight or ten paces, and then halted again, to renew the search. The water being much shallower than common, he stepped aside, in order to walk with greater ease to himself and came so near the artificial plantation that he might have touched it with his hand. Still he detected nothing, and was actually passing the spot when Pathfinder made an opening beneath the branches, and called to him in a low voice to enter.

"This is pretty well," said the Pathfinder, laughing; "though pale-face eyes and red-skin eyes are as different as human spy-glasses. I would wager, with the Sergeant's daughter here, a horn of powder against a wampum-belt for her girdle, that her father's rijiment should march by this embankment of ours and never find out the fraud! But if the Mingoes actually get down into the bed of the river where Jasper passed, I should tremble for the plantation. It will do for their eyes, even across the stream, however, and will not be without its use."

"Don't you think, Master Pathfinder, that it would be wisest, after all," said Cap, "to get under way at once, and carry sail hard down stream, as soon as we are satisfied that these rascals are fairly astern of us? We seamen call a stern chase a long chase."

"I wouldn't move from this spot until we hear from the Serpent with the Sergeant's pretty daughter here in our company, for all the powder in the magazine of the fort below. Sartain captivity or sartain death would follow. If a tender fa'n, such as the maiden we have in charge, could thread the forest like old deer, it might, indeed, do to quit the canoes; for by making a circuit we could reach the garrison before morning."

"Then let it be done," said Mabel, springing to her feet under the sudden impulse of awakened energy. "I am young, active, used to exercise, and could easily out-walk my dear uncle. Let no one think me a hindrance. I cannot bear that all your lives should be exposed on my account."

"No, no, pretty one; we think you anything but a hindrance or anything that is unbecoming, and would willingly run twice this risk to do you and the honest Sergeant a service. Do I not speak your mind, Eau-douce?"

"To do *her* a service!" said Jasper with emphasis. "Nothing shall tempt me to desert Mabel Dunham until she is safe in her father's arms."

"Well said, lad; bravely and honestly said, too; and I join in it, heart and hand. No, no! you are not the first of your sex I have led through the wilderness, and never but once did any harm befall any of them:— that was a sad day, certainly, but its like may never come again."

Mabel looked from one of her protectors to the other, and her fine eyes swam in tears. Frankly placing a hand in that of each, she answered them, though at first her voice was choked, "I have no right to expose you on my account. My dear father will thank you, I thank you, God will reward you; but let there be no unnecessary risk. I can walk far, and have often gone miles on some girlish fancy; why not now exert myself for my life? — nay, for your precious lives?"

"She is a true dove, Jasper" said the Pathfinder, neither relinquishing the hand he held until the girl herself, in native modesty, saw fit to withdraw it, "and wonderfully winning! We get to be rough, and sometimes even hard-hearted, in the woods, Mabel; but the sight of one like you brings us back again to our young feelings, and does us good for the remainder of our days. I daresay Jasper here will tell you the same; for, like me in the forest, the lad sees but few such as yourself on Ontario, to soften his heart and remind him of love for his kind. Speak out now, Jasper, and say if it is not so?"

"I question if many like Mabel Dunham are to be found anywhere," returned the young man gallantly, an honest sincerity glowing in his face that spoke more eloquently than his tongue; "you need not mention the woods and lakes to challenge her equals, but I would go into settlements and towns."

"We had better leave the canoes," Mabel hurriedly rejoined; "for I feel it is no longer safe to be here."

"You can never do it; you can never do it. It would be a march of more than twenty miles, and that, too, of tramping over brush and roots, and through swamps, in the dark; the trail of such a party would be wide, and we might have to fight our way into the garrison after all. We will wait for the Mohican."

Such appearing to be the decision of him to whom all, in their present strait, looked up for counsel, no more was said on the subject. The whole party now broke up into groups: Arrowhead and his wife sitting apart under the bushes, conversing in a low tone, though the man spoke sternly, and the woman answered with the subdued mildness that marks the degraded condition of a savage's wife. Pathfinder and Cap occupied one canoe, chatting of their different adventures by sea and land; while Jasper and Mabel sat in the other, making greater progress in intimacy in a single hour than might have been effected under other circumstances in a twelvemonth. Notwithstanding their situation as regards the enemy, the time flew by swiftly, and the young people, in particular, were astonished when Cap informed them how long they had been thus occupied.

"If one could smoke, Master Pathfinder," observed the old sailor, "this berth would be snug enough; for, to give the devil his due, you have got the canoes handsomely landlocked, and into moorings that would defy a monsoon. The only hardship is the denial of the pipe."

"The scent of the tobacco would betray us; and where is the use of taking all these precautions against the Mingo's eyes, if we are to tell him where the cover is to be found through the nose? No, no; deny your appetites; and learn one virtue from a red-skin, who will pass a week without eating even, to get a single scalp. Did you hear nothing, Jasper?"

"The Serpent is coming."

“Then let us see if Mohican eyes are better than them of a lad who follows the water.”

The Mohican had indeed made his appearance in the same direction as that by which Jasper had rejoined his friends. Instead of coming directly on, however, no sooner did he pass the bend, where he was concealed from any who might be higher up stream, than he moved close under the bank; and, using the utmost caution, got a position where he could look back, with his person sufficiently concealed by the bushes to prevent its being seen by any in that quarter.

“The Serpent sees the knaves!” whispered Pathfinder. “As I’m a Christian white man, they have bit at the bait, and have ambushed the smoke!”

Here a hearty but silent laugh interrupted his words, and nudging Cap with his elbow, they all continued to watch the movements of Chingachgook in profound stillness. The Mohican remained stationary as the rock on which he stood full ten minutes; and then it was apparent that something of interest had occurred within his view, for he drew back with a hurried manner, looked anxiously and keenly along the margin of the stream, and moved quickly down it, taking care to lose his trail in the shallow water. He was evidently in a hurry and concerned, now looking behind him, and then casting eager glances towards every spot on the shore where he thought a canoe might be concealed.

“Call him in,” whispered Jasper, scarcely able to restrain his impatience — “call him in, or it will be too late! See! he is actually passing us.”

“Not so, not so, lad; nothing presses, depend on it;” returned his companion, “or the Serpent would begin to creep. The Lord help us and teach us wisdom! I *do* believe even Chingachgook, whose sight is as faithful as the hound’s scent, overlooks us, and will not find out the ambushment we have made!”

This exultation was untimely; for the words were no sooner spoken than the Indian, who had actually got several feet lower down the stream than the artificial cover, suddenly stopped; fastened a keen-riveted glance among the transplanted bushes; made a few hasty steps backward; and, bending his body and carefully separating the branches, he appeared among them.

“The accursed Mingos!” said Pathfinder, as soon as his friend was near enough to be addressed with prudence.

“Iroquois,” returned the sententious Indian.

“No matter, no matter; Iroquois, devil, Mingo, Mengwes, or furies — all are pretty much the same. I call all rascals Mingos. Come hither, chief, and let us converse rationally.”

When their private communication was over, Pathfinder rejoined the rest, and made them acquainted with all he had learned.

The Mohican had followed the trail of their enemies some distance towards the fort, until the latter caught a sight of the smoke of Jasper’s fire, when they instantly retraced their steps. It now became necessary for Chingachgook, who ran the greatest risk of detection, to find a cover where he could secrete himself until the party might pass. It was perhaps fortunate for him that the savages were so intent on this recent discovery, that they did not bestow the ordinary attention on the signs of the forest. At all events, they passed him swiftly, fifteen in number, treading lightly in each other’s footsteps; and he was enabled again to get into their rear. After proceeding to the place where the footsteps of Pathfinder and the Mohican had joined the principal trail, the Iroquois had struck off to the river, which they reached just as Jasper had disappeared behind the bend below. The smoke being now in plain view, the savages plunged into the woods and endeavored to approach the fire unseen. Chingachgook profited by this occasion to descend to the water, and to gain the bend in the river also, which he thought had been effected undiscovered. Here he paused, as has been stated, until he saw his enemies at the fire, where their stay, however, was very short.

Of the motives of the Iroquois the Mohican could judge only by their acts. He thought they had detected the artifice of the fire, and were aware that it had been kindled with a view to mislead them; for, after a hasty examination of the spot, they had separated, some plunging again into the woods, while six or eight had followed the footsteps of Jasper along the shore, and come down the stream towards the place where the canoes had landed. What course they might take on reaching that spot was only to be conjectured; for the Serpent had felt the emergency to be too pressing to delay looking for his friends any longer. From some indications that were to be gathered from their gestures, however, he thought it probable that their enemies might follow down in the margin of the stream, but could not be certain.

As the Pathfinder related these facts to his companions, the professional feelings of the two other white men came uppermost, and both naturally reverted to their habits, in quest of the means of escape.

"Let us run out the canoes at once," said Jasper eagerly; "the current is strong, and by using the paddles vigorously we shall soon be beyond the reach of these scoundrels!"

"And this poor flower, that first blossomed in the clearings — shall it wither in the forest?" objected his friend, with a poetry which he had unconsciously imbibed by his long association with the Delawares.

"We must all die first," answered the youth, a generous color mounting to his temples; "Mabel and Arrowhead's wife may lie down in the canoes, while we do our duty, like men, on our feet."

"Ay, you are active at the paddle and the oar, Eau-douce, I will allow, but an accursed Mingo is more active at his mischief; the canoes are swift, but a rifle bullet is swifter."

"It is the business of men, engaged as we have been by a confiding father, to run this risk —"

"But it is not their business to overlook prudence."

"Prudence! a man may carry his prudence so far as to forget his courage."

The group was standing on the narrow strand, the Pathfinder leaning on his rifle, the butt of which rested on the gravelly beach, while both his hands clasped the barrel at the height of his own shoulders. As Jasper threw out this severe and unmerited imputation, the deep red of his comrade's face maintained its hue unchanged, though the young man perceived that the fingers grasped the iron of the gun with the tenacity of a vice. Here all betrayal of emotion ceased.

"You are young and hot-headed," returned Pathfinder, with a dignity that impressed his listeners with a keen sense of his moral superiority; "but my life has been passed among dangers of this sort, and my experience and gifts are not to be mastered by the impatience of a boy. As for courage, Jasper, I will not send back an angry and unmeaning word to meet an angry and an unmeaning word; for I know that you are true in your station and according to your knowledge; but take the advice of one who faced the Mingos when you were a child, and know that their cunning is easier sarcumvented by prudence than outwitted by foolishness."

"I ask your pardon, Pathfinder," said the repentant Jasper, eagerly grasping the hand that the other permitted him to seize; "I ask your pardon, humbly and sincerely. 'Twas a foolish, as well as wicked thing to hint of a man whose heart, in a good cause, is known to be as firm as the rocks on the lake shore."

For the first time the color deepened on the cheek of the Pathfinder, and the solemn dignity which he had assumed, under a purely natural impulse, disappeared in the expression of the earnest simplicity inherent in all his feelings. He met the grasp of his young friend with a squeeze as cordial as if no chord had jarred between them, and a slight sternness that had gathered about his eye disappeared in a look of natural kindness.

"'Tis well, Jasper," he answered, laughing; "I bear no ill-will, nor shall any one on my behalf. My natur' is that of a white man, and that is to bear no malice. It might have been ticklish work to have said half as much to the Sarpent here, though he is a Delaware, for color will have its way —"

A touch on his shoulder caused the speaker to cease. Mabel was standing erect in the canoe, her light, but swelling form bent forward in an attitude of graceful earnestness, her finger on her lips, her head averted, her spirited eyes riveted on an opening in the bushes, and one arm extended with a fishing-rod, the end of which had touched the Pathfinder. The latter bowed his head to a level with a look-out near which he had intentionally kept himself and then whispered to Jasper —

"The accursed Mingos! Stand to your arms, my men, but lay quiet as the corpses of dead trees!"

Jasper advanced rapidly, but noiselessly, to the canoe, and with a gentle violence induced Mabel to place herself in such an attitude as concealed her entire body, though it would have probably exceeded his means to induce the girl so far to lower her head that she could not keep her gaze fastened on their enemies. He then took his own post near her, with his rifle cocked and poised, in readiness to fire. Arrowhead and Chingachgook crawled to the cover, and lay in wait like snakes, with their arms prepared for service, while the wife of the former bowed her head between her knees, covered it with her calico robe, and remained passive and immovable. Cap loosened both his pistols in their belt, but seemed quite at a loss what course to pursue. The Pathfinder did not stir. He had originally got a position where he might aim with deadly effect through the leaves, and where he could watch the movements of his enemies; and he was far too steady to be disconcerted at a moment so critical.

It was truly an alarming instant. Just as Mabel touched the shoulder of her guide, three of the Iroquois had appeared in the water, at the bend of the river, within a hundred yards of the cover, and halted to examine the stream below. They

were all naked to the waist, armed for an expedition against their foes, and in their warpaint. It was apparent that they were undecided as to the course they ought to pursue in order to find the fugitives. One pointed down the river, a second up the stream, and the third towards the opposite bank. They evidently doubted.



## CHAPTER 5

*Death is here and death is there,  
Death is busy everywhere.*

—SHELLEY

It was a breathless moment. The only clue the fugitives possessed to the intentions of their pursuers was in their gestures and the indications which escaped them in the fury of disappointment. That a party had returned already, on their own footsteps, by land, was pretty certain; and all the benefit expected from the artifice of the fire was necessarily lost. But that consideration became of little moment just then; for the party was menaced with an immediate discovery by those who had kept on a level with the river. All the facts presented themselves clearly, and as it might be by intuition, to the mind of Pathfinder, who perceived the necessity of immediate decision and of being in readiness to act in concert. Without making any noise, therefore, he managed to get the two Indians and Jasper near him, when he opened his communications in a whisper.

“We must be ready, we must be ready,” he said. “There are but three of the scalping devils, and we are five, four of whom may be set down as manful warriors for such a skirmish. Eau-douce, do you take the fellow that is painted like death; Chingachgook, I give you the chief; and Arrowhead must keep his eye on the young one. There must be no mistake, for two bullets in the same body would be sinful waste, with one like the Sergeant’s daughter in danger. I shall hold myself in reserve against accident, lest a fourth reptile appear, for one of your hands may prove unsteady. By no means fire until I give the word; we must not let the crack of the rifle be heard except in the last resort, since all the rest of the miscreants are still within hearing. Jasper, boy, in case of any movement behind us on the bank, I trust to you to run out the canoe with the Sergeant’s daughter, and to pull for the garrison, by God’s leave.”

The Pathfinder had no sooner given these directions than the near approach of their enemies rendered profound silence necessary. The Iroquois in the river were slowly descending the stream; keeping of necessity near the bushes which overhung the water, while the rustling of leaves and the snapping of twigs soon gave fearful evidence that another party was moving along the bank, at an equally graduated pace; and directly abreast of them. In consequence of the distance between the bushes planted by the fugitives and the true shore, the two parties became visible to each other when opposite that precise point. Both stopped, and a conversation ensued, that may be said to have passed directly over the heads of those who were concealed. Indeed, nothing sheltered the travellers but the branches and leaves of plants, so pliant that they yielded to every current of air, and which a puff of wind a little stronger than common would have blown away. Fortunately the line of sight carried the eyes of the two parties of savages, whether they stood in the water or on the land, above the bushes, and the leaves appeared blended in a way to excite no suspicion. Perhaps the very boldness of the expedient alone prevented an immediate exposure. The conversation which took place was conducted earnestly, but in guarded tones, as if those who spoke wished to defeat the intentions of any listeners. It was in a dialect that both the Indian warriors beneath, as well as the Pathfinder, understood. Even Jasper comprehended a portion of what was said.

“The trail is washed away by the water!” said one from below, who stood so near the artificial cover of the fugitives, that he might have been struck by the salmon-spear that lay in the bottom of Jasper’s canoe. “Water has washed it so clear that a Yengeese hound could not follow.”

“The pale-faces have left the shore in their canoes,” answered the speaker on the bank.

“It cannot be. The rifles of our warriors below are certain.”

The Pathfinder gave a significant glance at Jasper, and he clinched his teeth in order to suppress the sound of his own breathing.

“Let my young men look as if their eyes were eagles’,” said the eldest warrior among those who were wading in the river. “We have been a whole moon on the war-path, and have found but one scalp. There is a maiden among them, and some of our braves want wives.”

Happily these words were lost on Mabel; but Jasper’s frown became deeper, and his face fiercely flushed.

The savages now ceased speaking, and the party which was concealed heard the slow and guarded movements of those who were on the bank, as they pushed the bushes aside in their wary progress. It was soon evident that the latter had

passed the cover; but the group in the water still remained, scanning the shore with eyes that glared through their war-paint like coals of living fire. After a pause of two or three minutes, these three began also to descend the stream, though it was step by step, as men move who look for an object that has been lost. In this manner they passed the artificial screen, and Pathfinder opened his mouth in that hearty but noiseless laugh that nature and habit had contributed to render a peculiarity of the man. His triumph, however, was premature; for the last of the retiring party, just at this moment casting a look behind him, suddenly stopped; and his fixed attitude and steady gaze at once betrayed the appalling fact that some neglected bush had awakened his suspicions.

It was perhaps fortunate for the concealed that the warrior who manifested these fearful signs of distrust was young, and had still a reputation to acquire. He knew the importance of discretion and modesty in one of his years, and most of all did he dread the ridicule and contempt that would certainly follow a false alarm. Without recalling any of his companions, therefore, he turned on his own footsteps; and, while the others continued to descend the river, he cautiously approached the bushes, on which his looks were still fastened, as by a charm. Some of the leaves which were exposed to the sun had drooped a little, and this slight departure from the usual natural laws had caught the quick eyes of the Indian; for so practised and acute do the senses of the savage become, more especially when he is on the war-path, that trifles apparently of the most insignificant sort often prove to be clues to lead him to his object.

The trifling nature of the change which had aroused the suspicion of this youth was an additional motive for not acquainting his companions with his discovery. Should he really detect anything, his glory would be the greater for being unshared; and should he not, he might hope to escape that derision which the young Indian so much dreads. Then there were the dangers of an ambush and a surprise, to which every warrior of the woods is keenly alive, to render his approach slow and cautious. In consequence of the delay that proceeded from these combined causes, the two parties had descended some fifty or sixty yards before the young savage was again near enough to the bushes of the Pathfinder to touch them with his hand.

Notwithstanding their critical situation, the whole party behind the cover had their eyes fastened on the working countenance of the young Iroquois, who was agitated by conflicting feelings. First came the eager hope of obtaining success where some of the most experienced of his tribe had failed, and with it a degree of glory that had seldom fallen to the share of one of his years or a brave on his first war-path; then followed doubts, as the drooping leaves seemed to rise again and to revive in the currents of air; and distrust of hidden danger lent its exciting feeling to keep the eloquent features in play. So very slight, however, had been the alteration produced by the heat on the bushes of which the stems were in the water, that when the Iroquois actually laid his hand on the leaves, he fancied that he had been deceived. As no man ever distrusts strongly without using all convenient means of satisfying his doubts, however, the young warrior cautiously pushed aside the branches and advanced a step within the hiding-place, when the forms of the concealed party met his gaze, resembling so many breathless statues. The low exclamation, the slight start, and the glaring eye, were hardly seen and heard, before the arm of Chingachgook was raised, and the tomahawk of the Delaware descended on the shaven head of his foe. The Iroquois raised his hands frantically, bounded backward, and fell into the water, at a spot where the current swept the body away, the struggling limbs still tossing and writhing in the agony of death. The Delaware made a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt to seize an arm, with the hope of securing the scalp; but the bloodstained waters whirled down the current, carrying with them their quivering burden.

All this passed in less than a minute, and the events were so sudden and unexpected, that men less accustomed than the Pathfinder and his associates to forest warfare would have been at a loss how to act.

"There is not a moment to lose," said Jasper, tearing aside the bushes, as he spoke earnestly, but in a suppressed voice. "Do as I do, Master Cap, if you would save your niece; and you, Mabel, lie at your length in the canoe."

The words were scarcely uttered when, seizing the bow of the light boat he dragged it along the shore, wading himself, while Cap aided behind, keeping so near the bank as to avoid being seen by the savages below, and striving to gain the turn in the river above him which would effectually conceal the party from the enemy. The Pathfinder's canoe lay nearest to the bank, and was necessarily the last to quit the shore. The Delaware leaped on the narrow strand and plunged into the forest, it being his assigned duty to watch the foe in that quarter, while Arrowhead motioned to his white companion to seize the bow of the boat and to follow Jasper. All this was the work of an instant; but when the Pathfinder reached the current that was sweeping round the turn, he felt a sudden change in the weight he was dragging, and, looking back, he found that both the Tuscarora and his wife had deserted him. The thought of treachery flashed upon his mind, but there was no time to

pause, for the wailing shout that arose from the party below proclaimed that the body of the young Iroquois had floated as low as the spot reached by his friends. The report of a rifle followed; and then the guide saw that Jasper, having doubled the bend in the river, was crossing the stream, standing erect in the stern of the canoe, while Cap was seated forward, both propelling the light boat with vigorous strokes of the paddles. A glance, a thought, and an expedient followed each other quickly in one so trained in the vicissitudes of the frontier warfare. Springing into the stern of his own canoe, he urged it by a vigorous shove into the current, and commenced crossing the stream himself, at a point so much lower than that of his companions as to offer his own person for a target to the enemy, well knowing that their keen desire to secure a scalp would control all other feelings.

“Keep well up the current, Jasper,” shouted the gallant guide, as he swept the water with long, steady, vigorous strokes of the paddle; “keep well up the current, and pull for the alder bushes opposite. Preserve the Sergeant’s daughter before all things, and leave these Mingo knaves to the Serpent and me.”

Jasper flourished his paddle as a signal of understanding, while shot succeeded shot in quick succession, all now being aimed at the solitary man in the nearest canoe.

“Ay, empty your rifles like simpletons as you are,” said the Pathfinder, who had acquired a habit of speaking when alone, from passing so much of his time in the solitude of the forest; “empty your rifles with an unsteady aim, and give me time to put yard upon yard of river between us. I will not revile you like a Delaware or a Mohican; for my gifts are a white man’s gifts, and not an Indian’s; and boasting in battle is no part of a Christian warrior; but I may say here, all alone by myself, that you are little better than so many men from the town shooting at robins in the orchards. That was well meant,” throwing back his head, as a rifle bullet cut a lock of hair from his temple; “but the lead that misses by an inch is as useless as the lead that never quits the barrel. Bravely done, Jasper! the Sergeant’s sweet child must be saved, even if we go in without our own scalps.”

By this time the Pathfinder was in the centre of the river, and almost abreast of his enemies, while the other canoe, impelled by the vigorous arms of Cap and Jasper, had nearly gained the opposite shore at the precise spot that had been pointed out to them. The old mariner now played his part manfully; for he was on his proper element, loved his niece sincerely, had a proper regard for his own person, and was not unused to fire, though his experience certainly lay in a very different species of warfare. A few strokes of the paddles were given, and the canoe shot into the bushes, Mabel was hurried to land by Jasper, and for the present all three of the fugitives were safe.

Not so with the Pathfinder: his hardy self-devotion had brought him into a situation of unusual exposure, the hazards of which were much increased by the fact that, just as he drifted nearest to the enemy the party on the shore rushed down the bank and joined their friends who still stood in the water. The Oswego was about a cable’s length in width at this point, and, the canoe being in the centre, the object was only a hundred yards from the rifles that were constantly discharged at it; or, at the usual target distance for that weapon.

In this extremity the steadiness and skill of the Pathfinder did him good service. He knew that his safety depended altogether on keeping in motion; for a stationary object at that distance, would have been hit nearly every shot. Nor was motion of itself sufficient; for, accustomed to kill the bounding deer, his enemies probably knew how to vary the line of aim so as to strike him, should he continue to move in any one direction. He was consequently compelled to change the course of the canoe — at one moment shooting down with the current, with the swiftness of an arrow; and at the next checking its progress in that direction, to glance athwart the stream. Luckily the Iroquois could not reload their pieces in the water, and the bushes that everywhere fringed the shore rendered it difficult to keep the fugitive in view when on the land. Aided by these circumstances, and having received the fire of all his foes, the Pathfinder was gaining fast in distance, both downwards and across the current, when a new danger suddenly, if not unexpectedly, presented itself, by the appearance of the party that had been left in ambush below with a view to watch the river.

These were the savages alluded to in the short dialogue already related. They were no less than ten in number; and, understanding all the advantages of their bloody occupation, they had posted themselves at a spot where the water dashed among rocks and over shallows, in a way to form a rapid which, in the language of the country, is called a rift. The Pathfinder saw that, if he entered this rift, he should be compelled to approach a point where the Iroquois had posted themselves, for the current was irresistible, and the rocks allowed no other safe passage, while death or captivity would be the probable result of the attempt. All his efforts, therefore, were turned toward reaching the western shore, the foe being all on the eastern side of the river; but the exploit surpassed human power, and to attempt to stem the stream would at



once have so far diminished the motion of the canoe as to render aim certain. In this exigency the guide came to a decision with his usual cool promptitude, making his preparations accordingly. Instead of endeavoring to gain the channel, he steered towards the shallowest part of the stream, on reaching which he seized his rifle and pack, leaped into the water, and began to wade from rock to rock, taking the direction of the western shore. The canoe whirled about in the furious current, now rolling over some slippery stone, now filling, and then emptying itself, until it lodged on the shore, within a few yards of the spot where the Iroquois had posted themselves.

In the meanwhile the Pathfinder was far from being out of danger; for the first minute, admiration of his promptitude and daring, which are so high virtues in the mind of an Indian, kept his enemies motionless; but the desire of revenge, and the cravings for the much-prized trophy, soon overcame this transient feeling, and aroused them from their stupor. Rifle flashed after rifle, and the bullets whistled around the head of the fugitive, amid the roar of the waters. Still he proceeded like one who bore a charmed life; for, while his rude frontier garments were more than once cut, his skin was not razed.

As the Pathfinder, in several instances, was compelled to wade in water which rose nearly to his arms, while he kept his rifle and ammunition elevated above the raging current, the toil soon fatigued him, and he was glad to stop at a large stone, or a small rock, which rose so high above the river that its upper surface was dry. On this stone he placed his powder-horn, getting behind it himself, so as to have the advantage of a partial cover for his body. The western shore was only fifty feet distant, but the quiet, swift, dark current that glanced through the interval sufficiently showed that here he would be compelled to swim.

A short cessation in the firing now took place on the part of the Indians, who gathered about the canoe, and, having found the paddles, were preparing to cross the river.

"Pathfinder," called a voice from among the bushes, at the point nearest to the person addressed, on the western shore.

"What would you have, Jasper?"

"Be of good heart — friends are at hand, and not a single Mingo shall cross without suffering for his boldness. Had you not better leave the rifle on the rock, and swim to us before the rascals can get afloat?"

"A true woodsman never quits his piece while he has any powder in his horn or a bullet in his pouch. I have not drawn a trigger this day, Eau-douce, and shouldn't relish the idea of parting with those reptiles without causing them to remember my name. A little water will not harm my legs; and I see that blackguard, Arrowhead, among the scamps, and wish to send him the wages he has so faithfully earned. You have not brought the Sergeant's daughter down here in a range with their bullets, I hope, Jasper?"

"She is safe for the present at least; though all depends on our keeping the river between us and the enemy. They must know our weakness now; and, should they cross, no doubt some of their party will be left on the other side."

"This canoeing touches your gifts rather than mine, boy, though I will handle a paddle with the best Mingo that ever struck a salmon. If they cross below the rift, why can't we cross in the still water above, and keep playing at dodge and turn with the wolves?"

"Because, as I have said, they will leave a party on the other shore; and then, Pathfinder, would you expose Mabel, to the rifles of the Iroquois?"

"The Sergeant's daughter must be saved," returned the guide, with calm energy. "You are right, Jasper; she has no gift to authorize her in offering her sweet face and tender body to a Mingo rifle. What can be done, then? They must be kept from crossing for an hour or two, if possible, when we must do our best in the darkness."

"I agree with you, Pathfinder, if it can be effected; but are we strong enough for such a purpose?"

"The Lord is with us, boy, the Lord is with us; and it is unreasonable to suppose that one like the Sergeant's daughter will be altogether abandoned by Providence in such a strait. There is not a boat between the falls and the garrison, except these two canoes, to my certain knowledge; and I think it will go beyond red-skin gifts to cross in the face of two rifles like these of yours and mine. I will not vaunt, Jasper; but it is well known on all this frontier that Killdeer seldom fails."

"Your skill is admitted by all, far and near, Pathfinder; but a rifle takes time to be loaded; nor are you on the land, aided by a good cover, where you can work to the advantage you are used to. If you had our canoe, might you not pass to the shore with a dry rifle?"

"Can an eagle fly, Jasper?" returned the other, laughing in his usual manner, and looking back as he spoke. "But it

would be unwise to expose yourself on the water; for them miscreants are beginning to bethink them again of powder and bullets."

"It can be done without any such chances. Master Cap has gone up to the canoe, and will cast the branch of a tree into the river to try the current, which sets from the point above in the direction of your rock. See, there it comes already; if it float fairly, you must raise your arm, when the canoe will follow. At all events, if the boat should pass you, the eddy below will bring it up, and I can recover it."

While Jasper was still speaking, the floating branch came in sight; and, quickening its progress with the increasing velocity of the current, it swept swiftly down towards the Pathfinder, who seized it as it was passing, and held it in the air as a sign of success. Cap understood the signal, and presently the canoe was launched into the stream, with a caution and an intelligence that the habits of the mariner had fitted him to observe. It floated in the same direction as the branch, and in a minute was arrested by the Pathfinder.

"This has been done with a frontier man's judgment Jasper," said the guide, laughing; "but you have your gifts, which incline most to the water, as mine incline to the woods. Now let them Mingo knaves cock their rifles and get rests, for this is the last chance they are likely to have at a man without a cover."

"Nay, shove the canoe towards the shore, quartering the current, and throw yourself into it as it goes off," said Jasper eagerly. "There is little use in running any risk."

"I love to stand up face to face with my enemies like a man, while they set me the example," returned the Pathfinder proudly. "I am not a red-skin born, and it is more a white man's gifts to fight openly than to lie in ambushment."

"And Mabel?"

"True, boy, true; the Sergeant's daughter must be saved; and, as you say, foolish risks only become boys. Think you that you can catch the canoe where you stand?"

"There can be no doubt, if you give a vigorous push."

Pathfinder made the necessary effort; the light bark shot across the intervening space, and Jasper seized it as it came to land. To secure the canoe, and to take proper positions in the cover, occupied the friends but a moment, when they shook hands cordially, like those who had met after a long separation.

"Now, Jasper, we shall see if a Mingo of them all dares cross the Oswego in the teeth of Killdeer! You are handier with the oar and the paddle and the sail than with the rifle, perhaps; but you have a stout heart and a steady hand, and them are things that count in a fight."

"Mabel will find me between her and her enemies," said Jasper calmly.

"Yes, yes, the Sergeant's daughter must be protected. I like you, boy, on your own account; but I like you all the better that you think of one so feeble at a moment when there is need of all your manhood. See, Jasper! Three of the knaves are actually getting into the canoe! They must believe we have fled, or they would not surely venture so much, directly in the very face of Killdeer."

Sure enough the Iroquois did appear bent on venturing across the stream; for, as the Pathfinder and his friends now kept their persons strictly concealed, their enemies began to think that the latter had taken to flight. Such a course was that which most white men would have followed; but Mabel was under the care of those who were much too well skilled in forest warfare to neglect to defend the only pass that, in truth, now offered even a probable chance for protection.

As the Pathfinder had said, three warriors were in the canoe, two holding their rifles at a poise, as they knelt in readiness to aim the deadly weapons, and the other standing erect in the stern to wield the paddle. In this manner they left the shore, having had the precaution to haul the canoe, previously to entering it, so far up the stream as to have got into the comparatively still water above the rift. It was apparent at a glance that the savage who guided the boat was skilled in the art; for the long steady sweep of his paddle sent the light bark over the glassy surface of the tranquil river as if it were a feather floating in air.

"Shall I fire?" demanded Jasper in a whisper, trembling with eagerness to engage.

"Not yet, boy, not yet. There are but three of them, and if Master Cap yonder knows how to use the popguns he carries in his belt, we may even let them land, and then we shall recover the canoe."

"But Mabel —?"

"No fear for the Sergeant's daughter. She is safe in the hollow stump, you say, with the opening judgmatically hid by the brambles. If what you tell me of the manner in which you concealed the trail be true, the sweet one might lie there a month and laugh at the Mingos."

"We are never certain. I wish we had brought her nearer to our own cover!"

"What for, Eau-douce? To place her pretty little head and leaping heart among flying bullets? No, no: she is better where she is, because she is safer."

"We are never certain. We thought ourselves safe behind the bushes, and yet you saw that we were discovered."

"And the Mingo imp paid for his curiosity, as these knaves are about to do."

The Pathfinder ceased speaking; for at that instant the sharp report of a rifle was heard, when the Indian in the stern of the canoe leaped high into the air, and fell into the water, holding the paddle in his hand. A small wreath of smoke floated out from among the bushes of the eastern shore, and was soon absorbed by the atmosphere.

"That is the Sarpent hissing!" exclaimed the Pathfinder exultingly. "A bolder or a truer heart never beat in the breast of a Delaware. I am sorry that he interfered; but he could not have known our condition."

The canoe had no sooner lost its guide than it floated with the stream, and was soon sucked into the rapids of the rift. Perfectly helpless, the two remaining savages gazed wildly about them, but could offer no resistance to the power of the element. It was perhaps fortunate for Chingachgook that the attention of most of the Iroquois was intently given to the situation of those in the boat, else would his escape have been to the last degree difficult, if not totally impracticable. But not a foe moved, except to conceal his person behind some cover; and every eye was riveted on the two remaining adventurers. In less time than has been necessary to record these occurrences, the canoe was whirling and tossing in the rift, while both the savages had stretched themselves in its bottom, as the only means of preserving the equilibrium. This natural expedient soon failed them; for, striking a rock, the light draft rolled over, and the two warriors were thrown into the river. The water is seldom deep on a rift, except in particular places where it may have worn channels; and there was little to be apprehended from drowning, though their arms were lost; and the two savages were fain to make the best of their way to the friendly shore, swimming and wading as circumstances required. The canoe itself lodged on a rock in the centre of the stream, where for the moment it became useless to both parties.

"Now is our time, Pathfinder," cried Jasper, as the two Iroquois exposed most of their persons while wading in the shallowest part of the rapids: "the fellow up stream is mine, and you can take the lower."

So excited had the young man become by all the incidents of the stirring scene, that the bullet sped from his rifle as he spoke, but uselessly, as it would seem, for both the fugitives tossed their arms in disdain. The Pathfinder did not fire.

"No, no, Eau-douce," he answered; "I do not seek blood without a cause; and my bullet is well leathered and carefully driven down, for the time of need. I love no Mingo, as is just, seeing how much I have consorted with the Delawares, who are their mortal and natural enemies; but I never pull trigger on one of the miscreants unless it be plain that his death will lead to some good end. The deer never leaped that fell by my hand wantonly. By living much alone with God in the wilderness a man gets to feel the justice of such opinions. One life is sufficient for our present wants; and there may yet be occasion to use Killdeer in behalf of the Sarpent, who has done an untimorous thing to let them rampant devils so plainly know that he is in their neighborhood. As I'm a wicked sinner, there is one of them prowling along the bank this very moment, like one of the boys of the garrison skulking behind a fallen tree to get a shot at a squirrel!"

As the Pathfinder pointed with his finger while speaking, the quick eye of Jasper soon caught the object towards which it was directed. One of the young warriors of the enemy, burning with a desire to distinguish himself, had stolen from his party towards the cover in which Chingachgook had concealed himself; and as the latter was deceived by the apparent apathy of his foes, as well as engaged in some further preparations of his own, he had evidently obtained a position where he got a sight of the Delaware. This circumstance was apparent by the arrangements the Iroquois was making to fire, for Chingachgook himself was not visible from the western side of the river. The rift was at a bend in the Oswego, and the sweep of the eastern shore formed a curve so wide that Chingachgook was quite near to his enemies in a straight direction, though separated by several hundred feet on the land, owing to which fact air lines brought both parties nearly equidistant from the Pathfinder and Jasper. The general width of the river being a little less than two hundred yards, such necessarily was about the distance between his two observers and the skulking Iroquois.

"The Sarpent must be thereabouts," observed Pathfinder, who never turned his eye for an instant from the young

warrior; “and yet he must be strangely off his guard to allow a Mingo devil to get his stand so near, with manifest signs of bloodshed in his heart.”

“See!” interrupted Jasper — “there is the body of the Indian the Delaware shot! It has drifted on a rock, and the current has forced the head and face above the water.”

“Quite likely, boy, quite likely. Human natur’ is little better than a log of driftwood, when the life that was breathed into its nostrils is departed. That Iroquois will never harm any one more; but yonder skulking savage is bent on taking the scalp of my best and most tried friend.”

The Pathfinder suddenly interrupted himself by raising his rifle, a weapon of unusual length, with admirable precision, and firing the instant it had got its level. The Iroquois on the opposite shore was in the act of aiming when the fatal messenger from Killdeer arrived. His rifle was discharged, it is true, but it was with the muzzle in the air, while the man himself plunged into the bushes, quite evidently hurt, if not slain.

“The skulking reptyle brought it on himself,” muttered Pathfinder sternly, as, dropping the butt of his rifle, he carefully commenced reloading it. “Chingachgook and I have consorted together since we were boys, and have fi’t in company on the Horican, the Mohawk, the Ontario, and all the other bloody passes between the country of the Frenchers and our own; and did the foolish knave believe that I would stand by and see my best friend cut off in an ambushment?”

“We have served the Sarpent as good a turn as he served us. Those rascals are troubled, Pathfinder, and are falling back into their covers, since they find we can reach them across the river.”

“The shot is no great matter, Jasper, no great matter. Ask any of the 60th, and they can tell you what Killdeer can do, and has done, and that, too, when the bullets were flying about our heads like hailstones. No, no! this is no great matter, and the unthoughtful vagabond drew it down on himself.”

“Is that a dog, or a deer, swimming towards this shore?” Pathfinder started, for sure enough an object was crossing the stream, above the rift, towards which, however, it was gradually setting by the force of the current. A second look satisfied both the observers that it was a man, and an Indian, though so concealed as at first to render it doubtful. Some stratagem was apprehended, and the closest attention was given to the movements of the stranger.

“He is pushing something before him as he swims, and his head resembles a drifting bush,” said Jasper.

“’Tis Indian devilry, boy; but Christian honesty shall circumvent their arts.”

As the man slowly approached, the observers began to doubt the accuracy of their first impressions, and it was only when two-thirds of the stream were passed that the truth was really known.

“The Big Sarpent, as I live!” exclaimed Pathfinder, looking at his companion, and laughing until the tears came into his eyes with pure delight at the success of the artifice. “He has tied bushes to his head, so as to hide it, put the horn on top, lashed the rifle to that bit of log he is pushing before him, and has come over to join his friends. Ah’s me! The times and times that he and I have cut such pranks, right in the teeth of Mingos raging for our blood, in the great thoroughfare round and about Ty!”

“It may not be the Serpent after all, Pathfinder; I can see no feature that I remember.”

“Feature! Who looks for features in an Indian? No, no, boy; ’tis the paint that speaks, and none but a Delaware would wear that paint: them are his colors, Jasper, just as your craft on the lake wears St. George’s Cross, and the Frenchers set their tablecloths to fluttering in the wind, with all the stains of fish-bones and venison steaks upon them. Now, you see the eye, lad, and it is the eye of a chief. But, Eau-douce, fierce as it is in battle, and glassy as it looks from among the leaves,”— here the Pathfinder laid his fingers lightly but impressively on his companion’s arm — “I have seen it shed tears like rain. There is a soul and a heart under that red skin, rely on it; although they are a soul and a heart with gifts different from our own.”

“No one who is acquainted with the chief ever doubted that.”

“I *know* it,” returned the other proudly, “for I have consorted with him in sorrow and in joy: in one I have found him a man, however stricken; in the other, a chief who knows that the women of his tribe are the most seemly in light merriment. But hist! It is too much like the people of the settlements to pour soft speeches into another’s ear; and the Sarpent has keen senses. He knows I love him, and that I speak well of him behind his back; but a Delaware has modesty in his inmost natur’, though he will brag like a sinner when tied to a stake.”

The Serpent now reached the shore, directly in the front of his two comrades, with whose precise position he must have been acquainted before leaving the eastern side of the river, and rising from the water he shook himself like a dog, and made the usual exclamation —“Hugh!”



## CHAPTER 6.

*These, as they change, Almighty Father, these,  
Are but the varied God.*

—THOMSON.

As the chief landed he was met by the Pathfinder, who addressed him in the language of the warrior's people: "Was it well done, Chingachgook," said he reproachfully, "to ambush a dozen Mingos alone? Killdeer seldom fails me, it is true; but the Oswego makes a distant mark, and that miscreant showed little more than his head and shoulders above the bushes, and an onpractysed hand and eye might have failed. You should have thought of this, chief — you should have thought of this!"

"The Great Serpent is a Mohican warrior — he sees only his enemies when he is on the war-path, and his fathers have struck the Mingos from behind, since the waters began to run."

"I know your gifts, I know your gifts, and respect them too. No man shall hear me complain that a red-skin obsarved red-skin natur'. But prudence as much becomes a warrior as valor; and had not the Iroquois devils been looking after their friends who were in the water, a hot trail they would have made of yourn."

"What is the Delaware about to do?" exclaimed Jasper, who observed at that moment that the chief had suddenly left the Pathfinder and advanced to the water's edge, apparently with an intention of again entering the river. "He will not be so mad as to return to the other shore for any trifle he may have forgotten?"

"Not he, not he; he is as prudent as he is brave, in the main, though so forgetful of himself in the late ambushment. Hark'e, Jasper," leading the other a little aside, just as they heard the Indian's plunge into the water — "hark'e, lad; Chingachgook is not a Christian white man, like ourselves, but a Mohican chief, who has his gifts and traditions to tell him what he ought to do; and he who consorts with them that are not strictly and altogether of his own kind had better leave natur' and use to govern his comrades. A king's soldier will swear and he will drink, and it is of little use to try to prevent him; a gentleman likes his delicacies, and a lady her feathers and it does not avail much to struggle against either; whereas an Indian's natur' and gifts are much stronger than these, and no doubt were bestowed by the Lord for wise ends, though neither you nor me can follow them in all their windings."

"What does this mean? See, the Delaware is swimming towards the body that is lodged on the rock? Why does he risk this?"

"For honor and glory and renown, as great gentlemen quit their quiet homes beyond seas — where, as they tell me, heart has nothing left to wish for; that is, such hearts as can be satisfied in a clearing — to come hither to live on game and fight the Frenchers."

"I understand you — your friend has gone to secure the scalp."

"Tis his gift, and let him enjoy it. We are white men, and cannot mangle a dead enemy; but it is honor in the eyes of a red-skin to do so. It may seem singular to you, Eau-douce, but I've known white men of great name and character manifest as remarkable idees consarning their honor, I have."

"A savage will be a savage, Pathfinder, let him keep what company he may."

"It is well for us to say so, lad; but, as I tell you, white honor will not always conform to reason or to the will of God. I have passed days thinking of these matters, out in the silent woods, and I have come to the opinion, boy, that, as Providence rules all things, no gift is bestowed without some wise and reasonable end."

"The Serpent greatly exposes himself to the enemy, in order to get his scalp! This may lose us the day."

"Not in his mind, Jasper. That one scalp has more honor in it, according to the Sarpent's notions of warfare, than a field covered with slain, that kept the hair on their heads. Now, there was the fine young captain of the 60th that threw away his life in trying to bring off a three-pounder from among the Frenchers in the last skrimmage we had; he thought he was sarving honor; and I have known a young ensign wrap himself up in his colors, and go to sleep in his blood, fancying that he was lying on something softer even than buffalo-skins."

"Yes, yes; one can understand the merit of not hauling down an ensign."

"And these are Chingachgook's colors — he will keep them to show his children's children —" Here the Pathfinder

interrupted himself, shook his head in melancholy, and slowly added, "Ah's me! no shoot of the old Mohican stem remains! He has no children to delight with his trophies; no tribe to honor by his deeds; he is a lone man in this world, and yet he stands true to his training and his gifts! There is something honest and respectable in these, you must allow, Jasper."

Here a great outcry from the Iroquois was succeeded by the quick reports of their rifles, and so eager did the enemy become, in the desire to drive the Delaware back from his victim, that a dozen rushed into the river, several of whom even advanced near a hundred feet into the foaming current, as if they actually meditated a serious sortie. But Chingachgook continued unmoved, as he remained unhurt by the missiles, accomplishing his task with the dexterity of long habit. Flourishing his reeking trophy, he gave the war-whoop in its most frightful intonations, and for a minute the arches of the silent woods and the deep vista formed by the course of the river echoed with cries so terrific that Mabel bowed her head in irrepressible fear, while her uncle for a single instant actually meditated flight.

"This surpasses all I have heard from the wretches," Jasper exclaimed, stopping his ears, equally in horror and disgust.

"'Tis their music, boy; their drum and fife; their trumpets and clarions. No doubt they love those sounds; for they stir up in them fierce feelings, and a desire for blood," returned the Pathfinder, totally unmoved. "I thought them rather frightful when a mere youngster; but they have become like the whistle of the whippoorwill or the song of the cat-bird in my ear now. All the screeching reptiles that could stand between the falls and the garrison would have no effect on my nerves at this time of day. I say it not in boasting, Jasper; for the man that lets in cowardice through the ears must have but a weak heart at the best; sounds and outcries being more intended to alarm women and children than such as scout the forest and face the foe. I hope the Serpent is now satisfied, for here he comes with the scalp at his belt."

Jasper turned away his head as the Delaware rose from the water, in pure disgust at his late errand; but the Pathfinder regarded his friend with the philosophical indifference of one who had made up his mind to be indifferent to things he deemed immaterial. As the Delaware passed deeper into the bushes with a view to wring his trifling calico dress and to prepare his rifle for service, he gave one glance of triumph at his companions, and then all emotion connected with the recent exploit seemed to cease.

"Jasper," resumed the guide, "step down to the station of Master Cap, and ask him to join us: we have little time for a council, and yet our plans must be laid quickly, for it will not be long before them Mingos will be plotting our ruin."

The young man complied; and in a few minutes the four were assembled near the shore, completely concealed from the view of their enemies, while they kept a vigilant watch over the proceedings of the latter, in order to consult on their own future movements.

By this time the day had so far advanced as to leave but a few minutes between the passing light and an obscurity that promised to be even deeper than common. The sun had already set and the twilight of a low latitude would soon pass into the darkness of deep night. Most of the hopes of the party rested on this favorable circumstance, though it was not without its dangers also, as the very obscurity which would favor their escape would be as likely to conceal the movements of their wily enemies.

"The moment has come, men," Pathfinder commenced, "when our plans must be coolly laid, in order that we may act together, and with a right understanding of our errand and gifts. In an hour's time these woods will be as dark as midnight; and if we are ever to gain the garrison, it must be done under favor of this advantage. What say you, Master Cap? for, though none of the most experienced in combats and retreats in the woods, your years entitle you to speak first in a matter like this and in a council."

"Well, in my judgment, all we have to do is to go on board the canoe when it gets to be so dark the enemy's lookouts can't see us, and run for the haven, as wind and tide will allow."

"That is easily said, but not so easily done," returned the guide. "We shall be more exposed in the river than by following the woods; and then there is the Oswego rift below us, and I am far from certain that Jasper himself can carry a boat safely through it in the dark. What say you, lad, as to your own skill and judgment?"

"I am of Master Cap's opinion about using the canoe. Mabel is too tender to walk through swamps and among roots of trees in such a night as this promises to be, and then I always feel myself stouter of heart and truer of eye when afloat than when ashore."

"Stout of heart you always be, lad, and I think tolerably true of eye for one who has lived so much in broad sunshine and so little in the woods. Ah's me! The Ontario has no trees, or it would be a plain to delight a hunter's heart! As to your

opinion, friends, there is much for and much against it. For it, it may be said water leaves no trail —”

“What do you call the wake?” interrupted the pertinacious and dogmatical Cap.

“Anan?”

“Go on,” said Jasper; “Master Cap thinks he is on the ocean — water leaves no trail —”

“It leaves none, Eau-douce, hereaway, though I do not pretend to say what it may leave on the sea. Then a canoe is both swift and easy when it floats with the current, and the tender limbs of the Sergeant’s daughter will be favored by its motion. But, on the other hand, the river will have no cover but the clouds in the heavens; the rift is a ticklish thing for boats to venture into, even by daylight; and it is six fairly measured miles, by water, from this spot to the garrison. Then a trail on land is not easy to be found in the dark. I am troubled, Jasper, to say which way we ought to counsel and advise.”

“If the Serpent and myself could swim into the river and bring off the other canoe,” the young sailor replied, “it would seem to me that our safest course would be the water.”

“If, indeed! and yet it might easily be done, as soon as it is a little darker. Well, well, I am not sartain it will not be the best. Though, were we only a party of men, it would be like a hunt to the lusty and brave to play at hide-and-seek with yonder miscreants on the other shore, Jasper,” continued the guide, into whose character there entered no ingredient which belonged to vain display or theatrical effect, “will you undertake to bring in the canoe?”

“I will undertake anything that will serve and protect Mabel, Pathfinder.”

“That is an upright feeling, and I suppose it is natur’. The Sarpent, who is nearly naked already, can help you; and this will be cutting off one of the means of them devils to work their harm.”

This material point being settled, the different members of the party prepared themselves to put the project in execution. The shades of evening fell fast upon the forest; and by the time all was ready for the attempt, it was found impossible to discern objects on the opposite shore. Time now pressed; for Indian cunning could devise so many expedients for passing so narrow a stream, that the Pathfinder was getting impatient to quit the spot. While Jasper and his companion entered the river, armed with nothing but their knives and the Delaware’s tomahawk, observing the greatest caution not to betray their movements, the guide brought Mabel from her place of concealment, and, bidding her and Cap proceed along the shore to the foot of the rapids, he got into the canoe that remained in his possession, in order to carry it to the same place.

This was easily effected. The canoe was laid against the bank, and Mabel and her uncle entered it, taking their seats as usual; while the Pathfinder, erect in the stern, held by a bush, in order to prevent the swift stream from sweeping them down its current. Several minutes of intense and breathless expectation followed, while they awaited the results of the bold attempt of their comrades.

It will be understood that the two adventurers were compelled to swim across a deep and rapid channel before they could reach a part of the rift that admitted of wading. This portion of the enterprise was soon effected; and Jasper and the Serpent struck the bottom side by side at the same instant. Having secured firm footing, they took hold of each other’s hands, and waded slowly and with extreme caution in the supposed direction of the canoe. But the darkness was already so deep that they soon ascertained they were to be but little aided by the sense of sight, and that their search must be conducted on that species of instinct which enables the woodsman to find his way when the sun is hid, no stars appear, and all would seem chaos to one less accustomed to the mazes of the forest. Under these circumstances, Jasper submitted to be guided by the Delaware, whose habits best fitted him to take the lead. Still it was no easy matter to wade amid the roaring element at that hour, and retain a clear recollection of the localities. By the time they believed themselves to be in the centre of the stream, the two shores were discernible merely by masses of obscurity denser than common, the outlines against the clouds being barely distinguishable by the ragged tops of the trees. Once or twice the wanderers altered their course, in consequence of unexpectedly stepping into deep water; for they knew that the boat had lodged on the shallowest part of the rift. In short, with this fact for their compass, Jasper and his companion wandered about in the water for nearly a quarter of an hour; and at the end of that period, which began to appear interminable to the young man, they found themselves apparently no nearer the object of their search than they had been at its commencement. Just as the Delaware was about to stop, in order to inform his associate that they would do well to return to the land, in order to take a fresh departure, he saw the form of a man moving about in the water, almost within reach of his arm. Jasper was at his side, and he at once understood that the Iroquois were engaged on the same errand as he was himself.



“Mingo!” he uttered in Jasper’s ear. “The Serpent will show his brother how to be cunning.”

The young sailor caught a glimpse of the figure at that instant, and the startling truth also flashed on his mind. Understanding the necessity of trusting all to the Delaware chief, he kept back, while his friend moved cautiously in the direction in which the strange form had vanished. In another moment it was seen again, evidently moving towards themselves. The waters made such an uproar that little was to be apprehended from ordinary sounds, and the Indian, turning his head, hastily said, “Leave it to the cunning of the Great Serpent.”

“Hugh!” exclaimed the strange savage, adding, in the language of his people, “The canoe is found, but there were none to help me. Come, let us raise it from the rock.”

“Willingly,” answered Chingachgook, who understood the dialect. “Lead; we will follow.”

The stranger, unable to distinguish between voices and accents amid the raging of the rapid, led the way in the necessary direction; and, the two others keeping close at his heels, all three speedily reached the canoe. The Iroquois laid hold of one end, Chingachgook placed himself in the centre, and Jasper went to the opposite extremity, as it was important that the stranger should not detect the presence of a pale-face, a discovery that might be made by the parts of the dress the young man still wore, as well as by the general appearance of his head.

“Lift,” said the Iroquois in the sententious manner of his race; and by a trifling effort the canoe was raised from the rock, held a moment in the air to empty it, and then placed carefully on the water in its proper position. All three held it firmly, lest it should escape from their hands under the pressure of the violent current, while the Iroquois, who led, of course, being at the upper end of the boat, took the direction of the eastern shore, or towards the spot where his friends waited his return.

As the Delaware and Jasper well knew there must be several more of the Iroquois on the rift, from the circumstance that their own appearance had occasioned no surprise in the individual they had met, both felt the necessity of extreme caution. Men less bold and determined would have thought that they were incurring too great a risk by thus venturing into the midst of their enemies; but these hardy borderers were unacquainted with fear, were accustomed to hazards, and so well understood the necessity of at least preventing their foes from getting the boat, that they would have cheerfully encountered even greater risks to secure their object. So all-important to the safety of Mabel, indeed, did Jasper deem the possession or the destruction of this canoe, that he had drawn his knife, and stood ready to rip up the bark, in order to render the boat temporarily unserviceable, should anything occur to compel the Delaware and himself to abandon their prize.

In the meantime, the Iroquois, who led the way, proceeded slowly through the water in the direction of his own party, still grasping the canoe, and dragging his reluctant followers in his train. Once Chingachgook raised his tomahawk, and was about to bury it in the brain of his confiding and unsuspecting neighbor; but the probability that the death-cry or the floating body might give the alarm induced that wary chief to change his purpose. At the next moment he regretted this indecision, for the three who clung to the canoe suddenly found themselves in the centre of a party of no less than four others who were in quest of it.

After the usual brief characteristic exclamations of satisfaction, the savages eagerly laid hold of the canoe, for all seemed impressed with the necessity of securing this important boat, the one side in order to assail their foes, and the other to secure their retreat. The addition to the party, however, was so unlooked-for, and so completely gave the enemy the superiority, that for a few moments the ingenuity and address of even the Delaware were at fault. The five Iroquois, who seemed perfectly to understand their errand, pressed forward towards their own shore, without pausing to converse; their object being in truth to obtain the paddles, which they had previously secured, and to embark three or four warriors, with all their rifles and powder-horns, the want of which had alone prevented their crossing the river by swimming as soon as it was dark.

In this manner, the body of friends and foes united reached the margin of the eastern channel, where, as in the case of the western, the river was too deep to be waded. Here a short pause succeeded, it being necessary to determine the manner in which the canoe was to be carried across. One of the four who had just reached the boat was a chief; and the habitual deference which the American Indian pays to merit, experience, and station kept the others silent until this individual had spoken.

The halt greatly added to the danger of discovering the presence of Jasper, in particular, who, however, had the

precaution to throw the cap he wore into the bottom of the canoe. Being without his jacket and shirt, the outline of his figure, in the obscurity, would now be less likely to attract observation. His position, too, at the stern of the canoe a little favored his concealment, the Iroquois naturally keeping their looks directed the other way. Not so with Chingachgook. This warrior was literally in the midst of his most deadly foes, and he could scarcely move without touching one of them. Yet he was apparently unmoved, though he kept all his senses on the alert, in readiness to escape, or to strike a blow at the proper moment. By carefully abstaining from looking towards those behind him, he lessened the chances of discovery, and waited with the indomitable patience of an Indian for the instant when he should be required to act.

"Let all my young men but two, one at each end of the canoe, cross and get their arms," said the Iroquois chief. "Let the two push over the boat."

The Indians quietly obeyed, leaving Jasper at the stern, and the Iroquois who had found the canoe at the bow of the light craft, Chingachgook burying himself so deep in the river as to be passed by the others without detection. The splashing in the water, the tossing arms, and the calls of one to another, soon announced that the four who had last joined the party were already swimming. As soon as this fact was certain, the Delaware rose, resumed his former station, and began to think the moment for action was come.

One less habitually under self-restraint than this warrior would probably have now aimed his meditated blow; but Chingachgook knew there were more Iroquois behind him on the rift, and he was a warrior much too trained and experienced to risk anything unnecessarily. He suffered the Indian at the bow of the canoe to push off into the deep water, and then all three were swimming in the direction of the eastern shore. Instead, however, of helping the canoe across the swift current, no sooner did the Delaware and Jasper find themselves within the influence of its greatest force than both began to swim in a way to check their farther progress across the stream. Nor was this done suddenly, or in the incautious manner in which a civilized man would have been apt to attempt the artifice, but warily, and so gradually that the Iroquois at the bow fancied at first he was merely struggling against the strength of the current. Of course, while acted on by these opposing efforts, the canoe drifted down stream, and in about a minute it was floating in still deeper water at the foot of the rift. Here, however, the Iroquois was not slow in finding that something unusual retarded their advance, and, looking back; he first learned that he was resisted by the efforts of his companions.

That second nature which grows up through habit instantly told the young Iroquois that he was alone with enemies. Dashing the water aside, he sprang at the throat of Chingachgook, and the two Indians, relinquishing their hold of the canoe, seized each other like tigers. In the midst of the darkness of that gloomy night, and floating in an element so dangerous to man when engaged in deadly strife, they appeared to forget everything but their fell animosity and their mutual desire to conquer.

Jasper had now complete command of the canoe, which flew off like a feather impelled by the breath under the violent reaction of the struggles of the two combatants. The first impulse of the youth was to swim to the aid of the Delaware, but the importance of securing the boat presented itself with tenfold force, while he listened to the heavy breathings of the warriors as they throttled each other, and he proceeded as fast as possible towards the western shore. This he soon reached; and after a short search he succeeded in discovering the remainder of the party and in procuring his clothes. A few words sufficed to explain the situation in which he had left the Delaware and the manner in which the canoe had been obtained.

When those who had been left behind had heard the explanations of Jasper, a profound stillness reigned among them, each listening intently in the vain hope of catching some clue to the result of the fearful struggle that had just taken place, if it were not still going on in the water. Nothing was audible beyond the steady roar of the rushing river; it being a part of the policy of their enemies on the opposite shore to observe the most deathlike stillness.

"Take this paddle, Jasper," said Pathfinder calmly, though the listeners thought his voice sounded more melancholy than usual, "and follow with your own canoe. It is unsafe for us to remain here longer."

"But the Serpent?"

"The Great Serpent is in the hands of his own Deity, and will live or die, according to the intentions of Providence. We can do him no good, and may risk too much by remaining here in idleness, like women talking over their distresses. This darkness is very precious."

A loud, long, piercing yell came from the shore, and cut short the words of the guide.

“What is the meaning of that uproar, Master Pathfinder?” demanded Cap. “It sounds more like the outcries of devils than anything that can come from the throats of Christians and men.”

“Christians they are not, and do not pretend to be, and do not wish to be; and in calling them devils you have scarcely misnamed them. That yell is one of rejoicing, and it is as conquerors they have given it. The body of the Serpent, no doubt, dead or alive, is in their power.

“And we!” exclaimed Jasper, who felt a pang of generous regret, as the idea that he might have averted the calamity presented itself to his mind, had he not deserted his comrade.

“We can do the chief no good, lad, and must quit this spot as fast as possible.”

“Without one attempt to rescue him? — without even knowing whether he be dead or living?”

“Jasper is right,” said Mabel, who could speak, though her voice sounded huskily and smothered; “I have no fears, uncle, and will stay here until we know what has become of our friend.”

“This seems reasonable, Pathfinder,” put in Cap. “Your true seaman cannot well desert a messmate; and I am glad to find that motives so correct exist among those fresh-water people.”

“Tut! tut!” returned the impatient guide, forcing the canoe into the stream as he spoke; “ye know nothing and ye fear nothing. If ye value your lives, think of reaching the garrison, and leave the Delaware in the hands of Providence. Ah’s me! the deer that goes too often to the lick meets the hunter at last!”



## CHAPTER 7.

*And is this — Yarrow? — this the stream  
Of which my fancy cherish'd  
So faithfully a waking dream?  
An image that hath perish'd?  
Oh that some minstrel's harp were near,  
To utter notes of gladness,  
And chase this silence from the air,  
That fills my heart with sadness.*

—WORDSWORTH.

THE scene was not without its sublimity, and the ardent, generous-minded Mabel felt her blood thrill in her veins and her cheeks flush, as the canoe shot into the strength of the stream, to quit the spot. The darkness of the night had lessened, by the dispersion of the clouds; but the overhanging woods rendered the shore so obscure, that the boats floated down the current in a belt of gloom that effectually secured them from detection. Still, there was necessarily a strong feeling of insecurity in all on board them; and even Jasper, who by this time began to tremble, in behalf of the girl, at every unusual sound that arose from the forest, kept casting uneasy glances around him as he drifted on in company. The paddle was used lightly, and only with exceeding care; for the slightest sound in the breathing stillness of that hour and place might apprise the watchful ears of the Iroquois of their position.

All these accessories added to the impressive grandeur of her situation, and contributed to render the moment much the most exciting which had ever occurred in the brief existence of Mabel Dunham. Spirited, accustomed to self-reliance, and sustained by the pride of considering herself a soldier's daughter, she could hardly be said to be under the influence of fear, yet her heart often beat quicker than common, her fine blue eye lighted with an exhibition of a resolution that was wasted in the darkness, and her quickened feelings came in aid of the real sublimity that belonged to the scene and to the incidents of the night.

"Mabel!" said the suppressed voice of Jasper, as the two canoes floated so near each other that the hand of the young man held them together, "you have no dread? You trust freely to our care and willingness to protect you?"

"I am a soldier's daughter, as you know, Jasper Western, and ought to be ashamed to confess fear."

"Rely on me — on us all. Your uncle, Pathfinder, the Delaware, were the poor fellow here, I myself, will risk everything rather than harm should reach you."

"I believe you, Jasper," returned the girl, her hand unconsciously playing in the water. "I know that my uncle loves me, and will never think of himself until he has first thought of me; and I believe you are all my father's friends, and would willingly assist his child. But I am not so feeble and weak-minded as you may think; for, though only a girl from the towns, and, like most of that class, a little disposed to see danger where there is none, I promise you, Jasper, no foolish fears of mine shall stand in the way of your doing your duty."

"The Sergeant's daughter is right, and she is worthy of being honest Thomas Dunham's child," put in the Pathfinder. "Ah's me, pretty one! many is the time that your father and I have scouted and marched together on the flanks and rear of the enemy, in nights darker than this, and that, too, when we did not know but the next moment would lead us into a bloody ambushment. I was at his side when he got the wound in his shoulder; and the honest fellow will tell you, when you meet, the manner in which we contrived to cross the river which lay in our rear, in order to save his scalp."

"He has told me," said Mabel, with more energy perhaps than her situation rendered prudent. "I have his letters, in which he has mentioned all that, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the service. God will remember it, Pathfinder; and there is no gratitude that you can ask of the daughter which she will not cheerfully repay for her father's life."

"Ay, that is the way with all your gentle and pure-hearted creatures. I have seen some of you before, and have heard of others. The Sergeant himself has talked to me of his own young days, and of your mother, and of the manner in which he courted her, and of all the crossings and disappointments, until he succeeded at last."

"My mother did not live long to repay him for what he did to win her," said Mabel, with a trembling lip.

"So he tells me. The honest Sergeant has kept nothing back; for, being so many years my senior, he has looked on me,

in our many scoutings together, as a sort of son."

"Perhaps, Pathfinder," observed Jasper, with a huskiness in his voice that defeated the attempt at pleasantry, "he would be glad to have you for one in reality."

"And if he did, Eau-douce, where would be the sin of it? He knows what I am on a trail or a scout, and he has seen me often face to face with the Frenchers. I have sometimes thought, lad, that we all ought to seek for wives; for the man that lives altogether in the woods, and in company with his enemies or his prey, gets to lose some of the feeling of kind in the end. It is not easy to dwell always in the presence of God and not feel the power of His goodness. I have attended church-service in the garrisons, and tried hard, as becomes a true soldier, to join in the prayers; for, though no enlisted servant of the king, I fight his battles and serve his cause, and so I have endeavored to worship garrison-fashion, but never could raise within me the solemn feelings and true affection that I feel when alone with God in the forest. There I seem to stand face to face with my Master; all around me is fresh and beautiful, as it came from His hand; and there is no nicety or doctrine to chill the feelings. No no; the woods are the true temple after all, for there the thoughts are free to mount higher even than the clouds."

"You speak the truth, Master Pathfinder," said Cap, "and a truth that all who live much in solitude know. What, for instance, is the reason that seafaring men in general are so religious and conscientious in all they do, but the fact that they are so often alone with Providence, and have so little to do with the wickedness of the land. Many and many is the time that I have stood my watch, under the equator perhaps, or in the Southern Ocean, when the nights are lighted up with the fires of heaven; and that is the time, I can tell you, my hearties, to bring a man to his bearings in the way of his sins. I have rattled down mine again and again under such circumstances, until the shrouds and lanyards of conscience have fairly creaked with the strain. I agree with you, Master Pathfinder, therefore, in saying, if you want a truly religious man, go to sea, or go into the woods."

"Uncle, I thought seamen had little credit generally for their respect for religion?"

"All d — d slander, girl; for all the essentials of Christianity the seaman beats the landsman hand-over-hand."

"I will not answer for all this, Master Cap," returned Pathfinder; "but I daresay some of it may be true. I want no thunder and lightning to remind me of my God, nor am I as apt to bethink on most of all His goodness in trouble and tribulations as on a calm, solemn, quiet day in a forest, when His voice is heard in the creaking of a dead branch or in the song of a bird, as much in my ears at least as it is ever heard in uproar and gales. How is it with you, Eau-douce? you face the tempests as well as Master Cap, and ought to know something of the feelings of storms."

"I fear that I am too young and too inexperienced to be able to say much on such a subject," modestly answered Jasper.

"But you have your feelings!" said Mabel quickly. "You cannot — no one can live among such scenes without feeling how much they ought to trust in God!"

"I shall not belie my training so much as to say I do not sometimes think of these things, but I fear it is not so often or so much as I ought."

"Fresh water," resumed Cap pithily; "you are not to expect too much of the young man, Mabel. I think they call you sometimes by a name which would insinuate all this: Eau-de-vie, is it not?"

"Eau-douce," quietly replied Jasper, who from sailing on the lake had acquired a knowledge of French, as well as of several of the Indian dialects. "It is a name the Iroquois have given me to distinguish me from some of my companions who once sailed upon the sea, and are fond of filling the ears of the natives with stories of their great salt-water lakes."

"And why shouldn't they? I daresay they do the savages no harm. Ay, ay, Eau-deuce; that must mean the white brandy, which may well enough be called the deuce, for deuced stuff it is!"

"The signification of Eau-douce is sweet-water, and it is the manner in which the French express fresh-water," rejoined Jasper, a little nettled.

"And how the devil do they make water out of Eau-in-deuce, when it means brandy in Eau-de-vie? Besides, among seamen, Eau always means brandy; and Eau-de-vie, brandy of a high proof. I think nothing of your ignorance, young man; for it is natural to your situation, and cannot be helped. If you will return with me, and make a v'y'ge or two on the Atlantic, it will serve you a good turn the remainder of your days; and Mabel there, and all the other young women near the coast, will think all the better of you should you live to be as old as one of the trees in this forest."

"Nay, nay," interrupted the single-hearted and generous guide; "Jasper wants not for friends in this region, I can assure you; and though seeing the world, according to his habits, may do him good as well as another, we shall think none the worse of him if he never quits us. Eau-douce or Eau-de-vie, he is a brave, true-hearted youth, and I always sleep as soundly when he is on the watch as if I was up and stirring myself; ay, and for that matter, sounder too. The Sergeant's daughter here doesn't believe it necessary for the lad to go to sea in order to make a man of him, or one who is worthy to be respected and esteemed."

Mabel made no reply to this appeal, and she even looked towards the western shore, although the darkness rendered the natural movements unnecessary to conceal her face. But Jasper felt that there was a necessity for his saying something, the pride of youth and manhood revolting at the idea of his being in a condition not to command the respect of his fellows or the smiles of his equals of the other sex. Still he was unwilling to utter aught that might be considered harsh to the uncle of Mabel; and his self-command was perhaps more creditable than his modesty and spirit.

"I pretend not to things I don't possess," he said, "and lay no claim to any knowledge of the ocean or of navigation. We steer by the stars and the compass on these lakes, running from headland to headland; and having little need of figures and calculations, make no use of them. But we have our claims notwithstanding, as I have often heard from those who have passed years on the ocean. In the first place, we have always the land aboard, and much of the time on a lee-shore, and that I have frequently heard makes hardy sailors. Our gales are sudden and severe, and we are compelled to run for our ports at all hours."

"You have your leads," interrupted Cap.

"They are of little use, and are seldom cast."

"The deep-seas."

"I have heard of such things, but confess I never saw one."

"Oh! deuce, with a vengeance. A trader, and no deep-sea! Why, boy, you cannot pretend to be anything of a mariner. Who the devil ever heard of a seaman without his deep-sea?"

"I do not pretend to any particular skill, Master Cap."

"Except in shooting falls, Jasper, except in shooting falls and rifts," said Pathfinder, coming to the rescue; "in which business even you, Master Cap, must allow he has some handiness. In my judgment, every man is to be esteemed or condemned according to his gifts; and if Master Cap is useless in running the Oswego Falls, I try to remember that he is useful when out of sight of land; and if Jasper be useless when out of sight of land, I do not forget that he has a true eye and steady hand when running the falls."

"But Jasper is not useless — would not be useless when out of sight of land," said Mabel, with a spirit and energy that caused her clear sweet voice to be startling amid the solemn stillness of that extraordinary scene. "No one can be useless there who can do so much here, is what I mean; though, I daresay, he is not as well acquainted with ships as my uncle."

"Ay, bolster each other up in your ignorance," returned Cap with a sneer. "We seamen are so much out-numbered when ashore that it is seldom we get our dues; but when you want to be defended, or trade is to be carried on, there is outcry enough for us."

"But, uncle, landmen do not come to attack our coasts; so that seamen only meet seamen."

"So much for ignorance! Where are all the enemies that have landed in this country, French and English, let me inquire, niece?"

"Sure enough, where are they?" ejaculated Pathfinder. "None can tell better than we who dwell in the woods, Master Cap. I have often followed their line of march by bones bleaching in the rain, and have found their trail by graves, years after they and their pride had vanished together. Generals and privates, they lay scattered throughout the land, so many proofs of what men are when led on by their love of great names and the wish to be more than their fellows."

"I must say, Master Pathfinder, that you sometimes utter opinions that are a little remarkable for a man who lives by the rifle; seldom snuffing the air but he smells gunpowder, or turning out of his berth but to bear down on an enemy."

"If you think I pass my days in warfare against my kind, you know neither me nor my history. The man that lives in the woods and on the frontiers must take the chances of the things among which he dwells. For this I am not accountable, being but an humble and powerless hunter and scout and guide. My real calling is to hunt for the army, on its marches and

in times of peace; although I am more especially engaged in the service of one officer, who is now absent in the settlements, where I never follow him. No, no; bloodshed and warfare are not my real gifts, but peace and mercy. Still, I must face the enemy as well as another; and as for a Mingo, I look upon him as man looks on a snake, a creatur' to be put beneath the heel whenever a fitting occasion offers."

"Well, well; I have mistaken your calling, which I had thought as regularly warlike as that of a ship's gunner. There is my brother-in-law, now; he has been a soldier since he was sixteen, and he looks upon his trade as every way as respectable as that of a seafaring man, a point I hardly think it worth while to dispute with him."

"My father has been taught to believe that it is honorable to carry arms," said Mabel, "for his father was a soldier before him."

"Yes, yes," resumed the guide; "most of the Sergeant's gifts are martial, and he looks at most things in this world over the barrel of his musket. One of his notions, now, is to prefer a king's piece to a regular, double-sighted, long-barrelled rifle. Such conceits will come over men from long habit; and prejudice is, perhaps, the commonest failing of human natur'."

While the desultory conversation just related had been carried on in subdued voices, the canoes were dropping slowly down with the current within the deep shadows of the western shore, the paddles being used merely to preserve the desired direction and proper positions. The strength of the stream varied materially, the water being seemingly still in places, while in other reaches it flowed at a rate exceeding two or even three miles in the hour. On the rifts it even dashed forward with a velocity that was appalling to the unpractised eye. Jasper was of opinion that they might drift down with the current to the mouth of the river in two hours from the time they left the shore, and he and the Pathfinder had agreed on the expediency of suffering the canoes to float of themselves for a time, or at least until they had passed the first dangers of their new movement. The dialogue had been carried on in voices, too, guardedly low; for though the quiet of deep solitude reigned in that vast and nearly boundless forest, nature was speaking with her thousand tongues in the eloquent language of night in a wilderness. The air sighed through ten thousand trees, the water rippled, and at places even roared along the shores; and now and then was heard the creaking of a branch or a trunk, as it rubbed against some object similar to itself, under the vibrations of a nicely balanced body. All living sounds had ceased. Once, it is true, the Pathfinder fancied he heard the howl of a distant wolf, of which a few prowled through these woods; but it was a transient and doubtful cry, that might possibly have been attributed to the imagination. When he desired his companions, however, to cease talking, his vigilant ear had caught the peculiar sound which is made by the parting of a dried branch of a tree and which, if his senses did not deceive him, came from the western shore. All who are accustomed to that particular sound will understand how readily the ear receives it, and how easy it is to distinguish the tread which breaks the branch from every other noise of the forest.

"There is the footstep of a man on the bank," said Pathfinder to Jasper, speaking in neither a whisper nor yet in a voice loud enough to be heard at any distance. "Can the accursed Iroquois have crossed the river already, with their arms, and without a boat?"

"It may be the Delaware. He would follow us, of course down this bank, and would know where to look for us. Let me draw closer into the shore, and reconnoitre."

"Go boy but be light with the paddle, and on no account venture ashore on an onsartainty."

"Is this prudent?" demanded Mabel, with an impetuosity that rendered her incautious in modulating her sweet voice.

"Very imprudent, if you speak so loud, fair one. I like your voice, which is soft and pleasing, after the listening so long to the tones of men; but it must not be heard too much, or too freely, just now. Your father, the honest Sergeant, will tell you, when you meet him, that silence is a double virtue on a trail. Go, Jasper, and do justice to your own character for prudence."

Ten anxious minutes succeeded the disappearance of the canoe of Jasper, which glided away from that of the Pathfinder so noiselessly, that it had been swallowed up in the gloom before Mabel allowed herself to believe the young man would really venture alone on a service which struck her imagination as singularly dangerous. During this time, the party continued to float with the current, no one speaking, and, it might almost be said, no one breathing, so strong was the general desire to catch the minutest sound that should come from the shore. But the same solemn, we might, indeed, say sublime, quiet reigned as before; the washing of the water, as it piled up against some slight obstruction, and the

sighing of the trees, alone interrupting the slumbers of the forest. At the end of the period mentioned, the snapping of dried branches was again faintly heard, and the Pathfinder fancied that the sound of smothered voices reached him.

"I may be mistaken," he said, "for the thoughts often fancy what the heart wishes; but these were notes like the low tones of the Delaware."

"Do the dead of the savages ever walk?" demanded Cap.

"Ay, and run too, in their happy hunting-grounds, but nowhere else. A red-skin finishes with the 'arth, after the breath quits the body. It is not one of his gifts to linger around his wigwam when his hour has passed."

"I see some object on the water," whispered Mabel, whose eye had not ceased to dwell on the body of gloom, with close intensity, since the disappearance of Jasper.

"It is the canoe," returned the guide, greatly relieved. "All must be safe, or we should have heard from the lad."

In another minute the two canoes, which became visible to those they carried only as they drew near each other, again floated side by side, and the form of Jasper was recognized at the stern of his own boat. The figure of a second man was seated in the bow; and, as the young sailor so wielded his paddle as to bring the face of his companion near the eyes of the Pathfinder and Mabel, they both recognized the person of the Delaware.

"Chingachgook — my brother!" said the guide in the dialect of the other's people, a tremor shaking his voice that betrayed the strength of his feelings. "Chief of the Mohicans! My heart is very glad. Often have we passed through blood and strife together, but I was afraid it was never to be so again."

"Hugh! The Mingos are squaws! Three of their scalps hang at my girdle. They do not know how to strike the Great Serpent of the Delawares. Their hearts have no blood; and their thoughts are on their return path, across the waters of the Great Lake."

"Have you been among them, chief? and what has become of the warrior who was in the river?"

"He has turned into a fish, and lies at the bottom with the eels! Let his brothers bait their hooks for him. Pathfinder, I have counted the enemy, and have touched their rifles."

"Ah, I thought he would be venturesome!" exclaimed the guide in English. "The risky fellow has been in the midst of them, and has brought us back their whole history. Speak, Chingachgook, and I will make our friends as knowing as ourselves."

The Delaware now related in a low earnest manner the substance of all his discoveries, since he was last seen struggling with his foe in the river. Of the fate of his antagonist he said no more, it not being usual for a warrior to boast in his more direct and useful narratives. As soon as he had conquered in that fearful strife, however, he swam to the eastern shore, landed with caution, and wound his way in amongst the Iroquois, concealed by the darkness, undetected, and, in the main, even unsuspected. Once, indeed, he had been questioned; but answering that he was Arrowhead, no further inquiries were made. By the passing remarks, he soon ascertained that the party was out expressly to intercept Mabel and her uncle, concerning whose rank, however, they had evidently been deceived. He also ascertained enough to justify the suspicion that Arrowhead had betrayed them to their enemies, for some motive that it was not now easy to reach, as he had not yet received the reward of his services.

Pathfinder communicated no more of this intelligence to his companions than he thought might relieve their apprehensions, intimating, at the same time, that now was the moment for exertion, the Iroquois not having yet entirely recovered from the confusion created by their losses.

"We shall find them at the rift, I make no manner of doubt," continued he; "and there it will be our fate to pass them, or to fall into their hands. The distance to the garrison will then be so short, that I have been thinking of a plan of landing with Mabel myself, that I may take her in, by some of the by-ways, and leave the canoes to their chances in the rapids."

"It will never succeed, Pathfinder," eagerly interrupted Jasper. "Mabel is not strong enough to tramp the woods in a night like this. Put her in my skiff, and I will lose my life, or carry her through the rift safely, dark as it is."

"No doubt you will, lad; no one doubts your willingness to do anything to serve the Sergeant's daughter; but it must be the eye of Providence, and not your own, that will take you safely through the Oswego rift in a night like this."

"And who will lead her safely to the garrison if she land? Is not the night as dark on shore as on the water? or do you think I know less of my calling than you know of yours?"



"Spiritedly said, lad; but if I should lose my way in the dark — and I believe no man can say truly that such a thing ever yet happened to me — but, if I *should* lose my way, no other harm would come of it than to pass a night in the forest; whereas a false turn of the paddle, or a broad sheer of the canoe, would put you and the young woman into the river, out of which it is more than probable the Sergeant's daughter would never come alive."

"I will leave it to Mabel herself; I am certain that she will feel more secure in the canoe."

"I have great confidence in you both," answered the girl; "and have no doubts that either will do all he can to prove to my father how much he values him; but I confess I should not like to quit the canoe, with the certainty we have of there being enemies like those we have seen in the forest. But my uncle can decide for me in this matter."

"I have no liking for the woods," said Cap, "while one has a clear drift like this on the river. Besides, Master Pathfinder, to say nothing of the savages, you overlook the sharks."

"Sharks! Who ever heard of sharks in the wilderness?"

"Ay! Sharks, or bears, or wolves — no matter what you call a thing, so it has the mind and power to bite."

"Lord, lord, man! Do you dread any creatur' that is to be found in the American forest? A catamount is a skeary animal, I will allow, but then it is nothing in the hands of a practysed hunter. Talk of the Mingos and their devilries if you will; but do not raise a false alarm about bears and wolves."

"Ay, ay, Master Pathfinder, this is all well enough for you, who probably know the name of every creature you would meet. Use is everything, and it makes a man bold when he might otherwise be bashful. I have known seamen in the low latitudes swim for hours at a time among sharks fifteen or twenty feet long."

"This is extraordinary!" exclaimed Jasper, who had not yet acquired that material part of his trade, the ability to spin a yarn. "I have always heard that it was certain death to venture in the water among sharks."

"I forgot to say, that the lads always took capstan-bars, or gunners' handspikes, or crows with them, to rap the beasts over the noses if they got to be troublesome. No, no, I have no liking for bears and wolves, though a whale, in my eye, is very much the same sort of fish as a red herring after it is dried and salted. Mabel and I had better stick to the canoe."

"Mabel would do well to change canoes," added Jasper. "This of mine is empty, and even Pathfinder will allow that my eye is surer than his own on the water."

"That I will, cheerfully, boy. The water belongs to your gifts, and no one will deny that you have improved them to the utmost. You are right enough in believing that the Sergeant's daughter will be safer in your canoe than in this; and though I would gladly keep her near myself, I have her welfare too much at heart not to give her honest advice. Bring your canoe close alongside, Jasper, and I will give you what you must consider as a precious treasure."

"I do so consider it," returned the youth, not losing a moment in complying with the request; when Mabel passed from one canoe to the other taking her seat on the effects which had hitherto composed its sole cargo.

As soon as this arrangement was made, the canoes separated a short distance, and the paddles were used, though with great care to avoid making any noise. The conversation gradually ceased; and as the dreaded rift was approached, all became impressed with the gravity of the moment. That their enemies would endeavor to reach this point before them was almost certain; and it seemed so little probable any one should attempt to pass it, in the profound obscurity which reigned, that Pathfinder was confident parties were on both sides of the river, in the hope of intercepting them when they might land. He would not have made the proposal he did had he not felt sure of his own ability to convert this very anticipation of success into a means of defeating the plans of the Iroquois. As the arrangement now stood, however, everything depended on the skill of those who guided the canoes; for should either hit a rock, if not split asunder, it would almost certainly be upset, and then would come not only all the hazards of the river itself, but, for Mabel, the certainty of falling into the hands of her pursuers. The utmost circumspection consequently became necessary, and each one was too much engrossed with his own thoughts to feel a disposition to utter more than was called for by the exigencies of the case.

At the canoes stole silently along, the roar of the rift became audible, and it required all the fortitude of Cap to keep his seat, while these boding sounds were approached, amid a darkness which scarcely permitted a view of the outlines of the wooded shore and of the gloomy vault above his head. He retained a vivid impression of the falls, and his imagination was not now idle in swelling the dangers of the rift to a level with those of the headlong descent he had that day made, and even to increase them, under the influence of doubt and uncertainty. In this, however, the old mariner was mistaken, for the Oswego Rift and the Oswego Falls are very different in their characters and violence; the former being no more than a

rapid, that glances among shallows and rocks, while the latter really deserved the name it bore, as has been already shown.

Mabel certainly felt distrust and apprehension; but her entire situation was so novel, and her reliance on her guide so great, that she retained a self-command which might not have existed had she clearer perceptions of the truth, or been better acquainted with the helplessness of men when placed in opposition to the power and majesty of Nature.

“Is that the spot you have mentioned?” she said to

Jasper, when the roar of the rift first came distinctly on her ears.

“It is; and I beg you to have confidence in me. We are not old acquaintances, Mabel; but we live many days in one, in this wilderness. I think, already, that I have known you years!”

“And I do not feel as if you were a stranger to me, Jasper. I have every reliance on your skill, as well as on your disposition to serve me.”

“We shall see, we shall see. Pathfinder is striking the rapids too near the centre of the river; the bed of the water is closer to the eastern shore; but I cannot make him hear me now. Hold firmly to the canoe, Mabel, and fear nothing.”

At the next moment the swift current had sucked them into the rift, and for three or four minutes the awe-struck, rather than the alarmed, girl saw nothing around her but sheets of glancing foam, heard nothing but the roar of waters. Twenty times did the canoe appear about to dash against some curling and bright wave that showed itself even amid that obscurity; and as often did it glide away again unharmed, impelled by the vigorous arm of him who governed its movements. Once, and once only, did Jasper seem to lose command of his frail bark, during which brief space it fairly whirled entirely round; but by a desperate effort he brought it again under control, recovered the lost channel, and was soon rewarded for all his anxiety by finding himself floating quietly in the deep water below the rapids, secure from every danger, and without having taken in enough of the element to serve for a draught.

“All is over, Mabel,” the young man cried cheerfully. “The danger is past, and you may now indeed hope to meet your father this very night.”

“God be praised! Jasper, we shall owe this great happiness to you.”

“The Pathfinder may claim a full share in the merit; but what has become of the other canoe?”

“I see something near us on the water; is it not the boat of our friends?”

A few strokes of the paddle brought Jasper to the side of the object in question: it was the other canoe, empty and bottom upwards. No sooner did the young man ascertain this fact, than he began to search for the swimmers, and, to his great joy, Cap was soon discovered drifting down with the current; the old seaman preferring the chances of drowning to those of landing among savages. He was hauled into the canoe, though not without difficulty, and then the search ended; for Jasper was persuaded that the Pathfinder would wade to the shore, the water being shallow, in preference to abandoning his beloved rifle.

The remainder of the passage was short, though made amid darkness and doubt. After a short pause, a dull roaring sound was heard, which at times resembled the mutterings of distant thunder, and then again brought with it the washing of waters. Jasper announced to his companions that they now heard the surf of the lake. Low curved spits of land lay before them, into the bay formed by one of which the canoe glided, and then it shot up noiselessly upon a gravelly beach. The transition that followed was so hurried and great, that Mabel scarcely knew what passed. In the course of a few minutes, however, sentinels had been passed, a gate was opened, and the agitated girl found herself in the arms of a parent who was almost a stranger to her.



## CHAPTER 8.

*A land of love, and a land of light,  
Withouten sun, or moon, or night:  
Where the river swa'd a living stream,  
And the light a pure celestial beam:  
The land of vision, it would seem  
A still, an everlasting dream.*  
QUEEN'S WAKE.

The rest that succeeds fatigue, and which attends a newly awakened sense of security, is generally sweet and deep. Such was the fact with Mabel, who did not rise from her humble pallet — such a bed as a sergeant's daughter might claim in a remote frontier post — until long after the garrison had obeyed the usual summons of the drums, and had assembled at the morning parade. Sergeant Dunham, on whose shoulders fell the task of attending to these ordinary and daily duties, had got through all his morning avocations, and was beginning to think of his breakfast, before his child left her room, and came into the fresh air, equally bewildered, delighted, and grateful, at the novelty and security of her new situation.

At the time of which we are writing, Oswego was one of the extreme frontier posts of the British possessions on this continent. It had not been long occupied, and was garrisoned by a battalion of a regiment which had been originally Scotch, but into which many Americans had been received since its arrival in this country; all innovation that had led the way to Mabel's father filling the humble but responsible situation of the oldest sergeant. A few young officers also, who were natives of the colonies, were to be found in the corps. The fort itself, like most works of that character, was better adapted to resist an attack of savages than to withstand a regular siege; but the great difficulty of transporting heavy artillery and other necessities rendered the occurrence of the latter a probability so remote as scarcely to enter into the estimate of the engineers who had planned the defences. There were bastions of earth and logs, a dry ditch, a stockade, a parade of considerable extent, and barracks of logs, that answered the double purpose of dwellings and fortifications. A few light field-pieces stood in the area of the fort, ready to be conveyed to any point where they might be wanted, and one or two heavy iron guns looked out from the summits of the advanced angles, as so many admonitions to the audacious to respect their power.

When Mabel, quitting the convenient, but comparatively retired hut where her father had been permitted to place her, issued into the pure air of the morning, she found herself at the foot of a bastion, which lay invitingly before her, with a promise of giving a *coup d'oeil* of all that had been concealed in the darkness of the preceding night. Tripping up the grassy ascent, the light-hearted as well as light-footed girl found herself at once on a point where the sight, at a few varying glances, could take in all the external novelties of her new situation.

To the southward lay the forest, through which she had been journeying so many weary days, and which had proved so full of dangers. It was separated from the stockade by a belt of open land, that had been principally cleared of its woods to form the martial constructions around her. This glacis, for such in fact was its military uses, might have covered a hundred acres; but with it every sign of civilization ceased. All beyond was forest; that dense, interminable forest which Mabel could now picture to herself, through her recollections, with its hidden glassy lakes, its dark rolling stream, and its world of nature.

Turning from this view, our heroine felt her cheek fanned by a fresh and grateful breeze, such as she had not experienced since quitting the far distant coast. Here a new scene presented itself: although expected, it was not without a start, and a low exclamation indicative of pleasure, that the eager eyes of the girl drank in its beauties. To the north, and east, and west, in every direction, in short, over one entire half of the novel panorama, lay a field of rolling waters. The element was neither of that glassy green which distinguishes the American waters in general, nor yet of the deep blue of the ocean, the color being of a slightly amber hue, which scarcely affected its limpidity. No land was to be seen, with the exception of the adjacent coast, which stretched to the right and left in an unbroken outline of forest with wide bays and low headlands or points; still, much of the shore was rocky, and into its caverns the sluggish waters occasionally rolled, producing a hollow sound, which resembled the concussions of a distant gun. No sail whitened the surface, no whale or other fish gambolled on its bosom, no sign of use or service rewarded the longest and most minute gaze at its boundless expanse. It was a scene, on one side, of apparently endless forests, while a waste of seemingly interminable water spread

itself on the other. Nature appeared to have delighted in producing grand effects, by setting two of her principal agents in bold relief to each other, neglecting details; the eye turning from the broad carpet of leaves to the still broader field of fluid, from the endless but gentle heavings of the lake to the holy calm and poetical solitude of the forest, with wonder and delight.

Mabel Dunham, though unsophisticated, like most of her countrywomen of that period, and ingenuous and frank as any warm-hearted and sincere-minded girl well could be, was not altogether without a feeling for the poetry of this beautiful earth of ours. Although she could scarcely be said to be educated at all, for few of her sex at that day and in this country received much more than the rudiments of plain English instruction, still she had been taught much more than was usual for young women in her own station in life; and, in one sense certainly, she did credit to her teaching. The widow of a field-officer, who formerly belonged to the same regiment as her father, had taken the child in charge at the death of its mother; and under the care of this lady Mabel had acquired some tastes and many ideas which otherwise might always have remained strangers to her. Her situation in the family had been less that of a domestic than of a humble companion, and the results were quite apparent in her attire, her language, her sentiments, and even in her feelings, though neither, perhaps, rose to the level of those which would properly characterize a lady. She had lost the less refined habits and manners of one in her original position, without having quite reached a point that disqualified her for the situation in life that the accidents of birth and fortune would probably compel her to fill. All else that was distinctive and peculiar in her belonged to natural character.

With such antecedents it will occasion the reader no wonder if he learns that Mabel viewed the novel scene before her with a pleasure far superior to that produced by vulgar surprise. She felt its ordinary beauties as most would have felt them, but she had also a feeling for its sublimity — for that softened solitude, that calm grandeur, and eloquent repose, which ever pervades broad views of natural objects yet undisturbed by the labors and struggles of man.

“How beautiful!” she exclaimed, unconscious of speaking, as she stood on the solitary bastion, facing the air from the lake, and experiencing the genial influence of its freshness pervading both her body and her mind. “How very beautiful! and yet how singular!”

The words, and the train of her ideas, were interrupted by a touch of a finger on her shoulder, and turning, in the expectation of seeing her father, Mabel found Pathfinder at her side. He was leaning quietly on his long rifle, and laughing in his quiet manner, while, with an outstretched arm, he swept over the whole panorama of land and water.

“Here you have both our domains,” said he — “Jasper’s and mine. The lake is for him, and the woods are for me. The lad sometimes boasts of the breadth of his dominions; but I tell him my trees make as broad a plain on the face of this ‘arth as all his water. Well, Mabel, you are fit for either; for I do not see that fear of the Mingos, or night-marches, can destroy your pretty looks.”

“It is a new character for the Pathfinder to appear in, to compliment a silly girl.”

“Not silly, Mabel; no, not in the least silly. The Sergeant’s daughter would do discredit to her worthy father, were she to do or say anything that could be called silly.”

“Then she must take care and not put too much faith in treacherous, flattering words. But, Pathfinder, I rejoice to see you among us again; for, though Jasper did not seem to feel much uneasiness, I was afraid some accident might have happened to you and your friend on that frightful rift.”

“The lad knows us both, and was sartain that we should not drown, which is scarcely one of my gifts. It would have been hard swimming of a sartainty, with a long-barrelled rifle in the hand; and what between the game, and the savages and the French, Killdeer and I have gone through too much in company to part very easily. No, no; we waded ashore, the rift being shallow enough for that with small exceptions, and we landed with our arms in our hands. We had to take our time for it, on account of the Iroquois, I will own; but, as soon as the skulking vagabonds saw the lights that the Sergeant sent down to your canoe, we well understood they would decamp, since a visit might have been expected from some of the garrison. So it was only sitting patiently on the stones for an hour, and all the danger was over. Patience is the greatest of virtues in a woodsman.”

“I rejoice to hear this, for fatigue itself could scarcely make me sleep, for thinking of what might befall you.”

“Lord bless your tender little heart, Mabel! but this is the way with all you gentle ones. I must say, on my part, however, that I was right glad to see the lanterns come down to the waterside, which I knew to be a sure sign of *your*

safety. We hunters and guides are rude beings; but we have our feelings and our ideas, as well as any general in the army. Both Jasper and I would have died before you should have come to harm — we would.”

“I thank you for all you did for me, Pathfinder; from the bottom of my heart, I thank you; and, depend on it, my father shall know it. I have already told him much, but have still a duty to perform on this subject.”

“Tush, Mabel! The Sergeant knows what the woods be, and what men — true red men — be, too. There is little need to tell him anything about it. Well, now you have met your father, do you find the honest old soldier the sort of person you expected to find?”

“He is my own dear father, and received me as a soldier and a father should receive a child. Have you known him long, Pathfinder?”

“That is as people count time. I was just twelve when the Sergeant took me on my first scouting, and that is now more than twenty years ago. We had a tramping time of it; and, as it was before your day, you would have had no father, had not the rifle been one of my natural gifts.”

“Explain yourself.”

“It is too simple for many words. We were ambushed, and the Sergeant got a bad hurt, and would have lost his scalp, but for a sort of inbred turn I took to the weapon. We brought him off, however, and a handsomer head of hair, for his time of life, is not to be found in the regiment than the Sergeant carries about with him this blessed day.”

“You saved my father’s life, Pathfinder!” exclaimed Mabel, unconsciously, though warmly, taking one of his hard, sinewy hands into both her own. “God bless you for this, too, among your other good acts!”

“Nay, I did not say that much, though I believe I did save his scalp. A man might live without a scalp, and so I cannot say I saved his life. Jasper may say that much concerning you; for without his eye and arm the canoe would never have passed the rift in safety on a night like the last. The gifts of the lad are for the water, while mine are for the hunt and the trail. He is yonder, in the cove there, looking after the canoes, and keeping his eye on his beloved little craft. To my eye, there is no likelier youth in these parts than Jasper Western.”

For the first time since she had left her room, Mabel now turned her eyes beneath her, and got a view of what might be called the foreground of the remarkable picture she had been studying with so much pleasure. The Oswego threw its dark waters into the lake, between banks of some height; that on its eastern side being bolder and projecting farther north than that on its western. The fort was on the latter, and immediately beneath it were a few huts of logs, which, as they could not interfere with the defence of the place, had been erected along the strand for the purpose of receiving and containing such stores as were landed, or were intended to be embarked, in the communications between the different ports on the shores of Ontario. Two low, curved, gravelly points had been formed with surprising regularity by the counteracting forces of the northerly winds and the swift current, and, inclining from the storms of the lake, formed two coves within the river: that on the western side was the most deeply indented; and, as it also had the most water, it formed a sort of picturesque little port for the post. It was along the narrow strand that lay between the low height of the fort and the water of this cove, that the rude buildings just mentioned had been erected.

Several skiffs, bateaux, and canoes were hauled up on the shore, and in the cove itself lay the little craft from which Jasper obtained his claim to be considered a sailor. She was cutter-rigged, might have been of forty tons burthen, was so neatly constructed and painted as to have something of the air of a vessel of war, though entirely without quarters, and rigged and sparred with so scrupulous a regard to proportions and beauty, as well as fitness and judgment, as to give her an appearance that even Mabel at once distinguished to be gallant and trim. Her mould was admirable, for a wright of great skill had sent her drafts from England, at the express request of the officer who had caused her to be constructed; her paint dark, warlike, and neat; and the long coach-whip pennant that she wore at once proclaimed her to be the property of the king. Her name was the *Scud*.

“That, then, is the vessel of Jasper!” said Mabel, who associated the master of the little craft very naturally with the cutter itself. “Are there many others on this lake?”

“The Frenchers have three: one of which, they tell me, is a real ship, such as are used on the ocean; another a brig; and a third is a cutter, like the *Scud* here, which they call the *Squirrel*, in their own tongue, however; and which seems to have a natural hatred of our own pretty boat, for Jasper seldom goes out that the *Squirrel* is not at his heels.”

“And is Jasper one to run from a Frenchman, though he appears in the shape of a squirrel, and that, too, on the

water?”

“Of what use would valor be without the means of turning it to account? Jasper is a brave boy, as all on this frontier know; but he has no gun except a little howitzer, and then his crew consists only of two men besides himself, and a boy. I was with him in one of his trampooses, and the youngster was risky enough, for he brought us so near the enemy that rifles began to talk; but the Frenchers carry cannon and ports, and never show their faces outside of Frontenac, without having some twenty men, besides their *Squirrel*, in their cutter. No, no; this *Scud* was built for flying, and the major says he will not put her in a fighting humor by giving her men and arms, lest she should take him at his word, and get her wings clipped. I know little of these things, for my gifts are not at all in that way; but I see the reason of the thing — I see its reason, though Jasper does not.”

“Ah! Here is my uncle, none the worse for his swim, coming to look at this inland sea.”

Sure enough, Cap, who had announced his approach by a couple of lusty hems, now made his appearance on the bastion, where, after nodding to his niece and her companion, he made a deliberate survey of the expanse of water before him. In order to effect this at his ease, the mariner mounted on one of the old iron guns, folded his arms across his breast, and balanced his body, as if he felt the motion of a vessel. To complete the picture, he had a short pipe in his mouth.

“Well, Master Cap,” asked the Pathfinder innocently, for he did not detect the expression of contempt that was gradually settling on the features of the other; “is it not a beautiful sheet, and fit to be named a sea?”

“This, then, is what you call your lake?” demanded Cap, sweeping the northern horizon with his pipe. “I say, is this really your lake?”

“Sartain; and, if the judgment of one who has lived on the shores of many others can be taken, a very good lake it is.”

“Just as I expected. A pond in dimensions, and a scuttle-butt in taste. It is all in vain to travel inland, in the hope of seeing anything either full-grown or useful. I knew it would turn out just in this way.”

“What is the matter with Ontario, Master Cap? It is large, and fair to look at, and pleasant enough to drink, for those who can’t get at the water of the springs.”

“Do you call this large?” asked Cap, again sweeping the air with the pipe. “I will just ask you what there is large about it? Didn’t Jasper himself confess that it was only some twenty leagues from shore to shore?”

“But, uncle,” interposed Mabel, “no land is to be seen, except here on our own coast. To me it looks exactly like the ocean.”

“This bit of a pond look like the ocean! Well, Magnet, that from a girl who has had real seamen in her family is downright nonsense. What is there about it, pray, that has even the outline of a sea on it?”

“Why, there is water — water — water — nothing but water, for miles on miles — far as the eye can see.”

“And isn’t there water — water — water — nothing but water for miles on miles in your rivers, that you have been canoeing through, too? — Ay, and ‘as far as the eye can see,’ in the bargain?”

“Yes, uncle, but the rivers have their banks, and there are trees along them, and they are narrow.”

“And isn’t this a bank where we stand? Don’t these soldiers call this the bank of the lake? And aren’t there trees in thousands? And aren’t twenty leagues narrow enough of all conscience? Who the devil ever heard of the banks of the ocean, unless it might be the banks that are under water?”

“But, uncle, we cannot see across this lake, as we can see across a river.”

“There you are out, Magnet. Aren’t the Amazon and Orinoco and La Plata rivers, and can you see across them? Hark’e Pathfinder, I very much doubt if this stripe of water here be even a lake; for to me it appears to be only a river. You are by no means particular about your geography, I find, up here in the woods.”

“There *you* are out, Master Cap. There is a river, and a noble one too, at each end of it; but this is old Ontario before you; and, though it is not my gift to live on a lake, to my judgment there are few better than this.”

“And, uncle, if we stood on the beach at Rockaway, what more should we see than we now behold? There is a shore on one side, or banks there, and trees too, as well as those which are here.”

“This is perverseness, Magnet, and young girls should steer clear of anything like obstinacy. In the first place, the ocean has coasts, but no banks, except the Grand Banks, as I tell you, which are out of sight of land; and you will not pretend that this bank is out of sight of land, or even under water?”

As Mabel could not very plausibly set up this extravagant opinion, Cap pursued the subject, his countenance beginning to discover the triumph of a successful disputant.

“And then them trees bear no comparison to these trees. The coasts of the ocean have farms and cities and country-seats, and, in some parts of the world, castles and monasteries and lighthouses — ay, ay — lighthouses, in particular, on them; not one of all which things is to be seen here. No, no, Master Pathfinder; I never heard of an ocean that hadn’t more or less lighthouses on it; whereas, hereaway there is not even a beacon.”

“There is what is better, there is what is better; a forest and noble trees, a fit temple of God.”

“Ay, your forest may do for a lake; but of what use would an ocean be if the earth all around it were forest? Ships would be unnecessary, as timber might be floated in rafts, and there would be an end of trade, and what would a world be without trade? I am of that philosopher’s opinion who says human nature was invented for the purposes of trade. Magnet, I am astonished that you should think this water even looks like sea-water! Now, I daresay that there isn’t such a thing as a whale in all your lake, Master Pathfinder?”

“I never heard of one, I will confess; but I am no judge of animals that live in the water, unless it be the fishes of the rivers and the brooks.”

“Nor a grampus, nor a porpoise even? not so much as a poor devil of a shark?”

“I will not take it on myself to say there is either. My gifts are not in that way, I tell you, Master Cap.”

“Nor herring, nor albatross, nor flying-fish?” continued Cap, who kept his eye fastened on the guide, in order to see how far he might venture. “No such thing as a fish that can fly, I daresay?”

“A fish that can fly! Master Cap, Master Cap, do not think, because we are mere borderers, that we have no ideas of natur’, and what she has been pleased to do. I know there are squirrels that can fly —”

“A squirrel fly! — The devil, Master Pathfinder! Do you suppose that you have got a boy on his first v’yge up here among you?”

“I know nothing of your v’yges, Master Cap, though I suppose them to have been many; for as for what belongs to natur’ in the woods, what I have seen I may tell, and not fear the face of man.”

“And do you wish me to understand that you have seen a squirrel fly?”

“If you wish to understand the power of God, Master Cap, you will do well to believe that, and many other things of a like natur’, for you may be quite sartain it is true.”

“And yet, Pathfinder,” said Mabel, looking so prettily and sweetly even while she played with the guide’s infirmity, that he forgave her in his heart, “you, who speak so reverently of the power of the Deity, appear to doubt that a fish can fly.”

“I have not said it, I have not said it; and if Master Cap is ready to testify to the fact, unlikely as it seems, I am willing to try to think it true. I think it every man’s duty to believe in the power of God, however difficult it may be.”

“And why isn’t my fish as likely to have wings as your squirrel?” demanded Cap, with more logic than was his wont. “That fishes do and can fly is as true as it is reasonable.”

“Nay, that is the only difficulty in believing the story,” rejoined the guide. “It seems unreasonable to give an animal that lives in the water wings, which seemingly can be of no use to it.”

“And do you suppose that the fishes are such asses as to fly about under water, when they are once fairly fitted out with wings?”

“Nay, I know nothing of the matter; but that fish should fly in the air seems more contrary to natur’ still, than that they should fly in their own element — that in which they were born and brought up, as one might say.”

“So much for contracted ideas, Magnet. The fish fly out of water to run away from their enemies in the water; and there you see not only the fact, but the reason for it.”

“Then I suppose it must be true,” said the guide quietly. “How long are their flights?”

“Not quite as far as those of pigeons, perhaps; but far enough to make an offing. As for those squirrels of yours, we’ll say no more about them, friend Pathfinder, as I suppose they were mentioned just as a make-weight to the fish, in favor of the woods. But what is this thing anchored here under the hill?”

“That is the cutter of Jasper, uncle,” said Mabel hurriedly; “and a very pretty vessel I think it is. Its name, too, is the *Scud*.”

"Ay, it will do well enough for a lake, perhaps, but it's no great affair. The lad has got a standing bowsprit, and who ever saw a cutter with a standing bowsprit before?"

"But may there not be some good reason for it, on a lake like this, uncle?"

"Sure enough — I must remember this is not the ocean, though it does look so much like it."

"Ah, uncle! Then Ontario does look like the ocean, after all?"

"In your eyes, I mean, and those of Pathfinder; not in the least in mine, Magnet. Now you might set me down out yonder, in the middle of this bit of a pond, and that, too, in the darkest night that ever fell from the heavens, and in the smallest canoe, and I could tell you it was only a lake. For that matter, the *Dorothy*" (the name of his vessel) "would find it out as quick as I could myself. I do not believe that brig would make more than a couple of short stretches, at the most, before she would perceive the difference between Ontario and the old Atlantic. I once took her down into one of the large South American bays, and she behaved herself as awkwardly as a booby would in a church with the congregation in a hurry. And Jasper sails that boat? I must have a cruise with the lad, Magnet, before I quit you, just for the name of the thing. It would never do to say I got in sight of this pond, and went away without taking a trip on it."

"Well well, you needn't wait long for that," returned Pathfinder; "for the Sergeant is about to embark with a party to relieve a post among the Thousand Islands; and as I heard him say he intended that Mabel should go along, you can join the company too."

"Is this true, Magnet?"

"I believe it is," returned the girl, a flush so imperceptible as to escape the observation of her companions glowing on her cheeks; "though I have had so little opportunity to talk with my dear father that I am not quite certain. Here he comes, however, and you can inquire of himself."

Notwithstanding his humble rank, there was something in the mien and character of Sergeant Dunham that commanded respect: of a tall, imposing figure, grave and saturnine disposition, and accurate and precise in his acts and manner of thinking, even Cap, dogmatical and supercilious as he usually was with landsmen, did not presume to take the same liberties with the old soldier as he did with his other friends. It was often remarked that Sergeant Dunham received more true respect from Duncan of Lundie, the Scotch laird who commanded the post, than most of the subalterns; for experience and tried services were of quite as much value in the eyes of the veteran major as birth and money. While the Sergeant never even hoped to rise any higher, he so far respected himself and his present station as always to act in a way to command attention; and the habit of mixing so much with inferiors, whose passions and dispositions he felt it necessary to restrain by distance and dignity, had so far colored his whole deportment, that few were altogether free from its influence. While the captains treated him kindly and as an old comrade, the lieutenants seldom ventured to dissent from his military opinions; and the ensigns, it was remarked, actually manifested a species of respect that amounted to something very like deference. It is no wonder, then, that the announcement of Mabel put a sudden termination to the singular dialogue we have just related, though it had been often observed that the Pathfinder was the only man on that frontier, beneath the condition of a gentleman, who presumed to treat the Sergeant at all as an equal, or even with the cordial familiarity of a friend.

"Good morrow, brother Cap," said the Sergeant giving the military salute, as he walked, in a grave, stately manner, on the bastion. "My morning duty has made me seem forgetful of you and Mabel; but we have now an hour or two to spare, and to get acquainted. Do you not perceive, brother, a strong likeness on the girl to her we have so long lost?"

"Mabel is the image of her mother, Sergeant, as I have always said, with a little of your firmer figure; though, for that matter, the Caps were never wanting in spring and activity."

Mabel cast a timid glance at the stern, rigid countenance of her father, of whom she had ever thought, as the warm-hearted dwell on the affection of their absent parents; and, as she saw that the muscles of his face were working, notwithstanding the stiffness and method of his manner, her very heart yearned to throw herself on his bosom and to weep at will. But he was so much colder in externals, so much more formal and distant than she had expected to find him, that she would not have dared to hazard the freedom, even had they been alone.

"You have taken a long and troublesome journey, brother, on my account; and we will try to make you comfortable while you stay among us."

"I hear you are likely to receive orders to lift your anchor, Sergeant, and to shift your berth into a part of the world



where they say there are a thousand islands.”

“Pathfinder, this is some of your forgetfulness?”

“Nay, nay, Sergeant, I forgot nothing; but it did not seem to me necessary to hide your intentions so very closely from your own flesh and blood.”

“All military movements ought to be made with as little conversation as possible,” returned the Sergeant, tapping the guide’s shoulder in a friendly, but reproachful manner. “You have passed too much of your life in front of the French not to know the value of silence. But no matter; the thing must soon be known, and there is no great use in trying now to conceal it. We shall embark a relief party shortly for a post on the lake, though I do not say it is for the Thousand Islands, and I may have to go with it; in which case I intend to take Mabel to make my broth for me; and I hope, brother, you will not despise a soldier’s fare for a month or so.”

“That will depend on the manner of marching. I have no love for woods and swamps.”

“We shall sail in the *Scud*; and, indeed, the whole service, which is no stranger to us, is likely enough to please one accustomed to the water.”

“Ay, to salt-water if you will, but not to lake-water. If you have no person to handle that bit of a cutter for you, I have no objection to ship for the v’yge, notwithstanding; though I shall look on the whole affair as so much time thrown away, for I consider it an imposition to call sailing about this pond going to sea.”

“Jasper is every way able to manage the *Scud*, brother Cap; and in that light I cannot say that we have need of your services, though we shall be glad of your company. You cannot return to the settlement until a party is sent in, and that is not likely to happen until after my return. Well, Pathfinder, this is the first time I ever knew men on the trail of the Mingos and you not at their head.”

“To be honest with you, Sergeant,” returned the guide, not without a little awkwardness of manner, and a perceptible difference in the hue of a face that had become so uniformly red by exposure, “I have not felt that it was my gift this morning. In the first place, I very well know that the soldiers of the 55th are not the lads to overtake Iroquois in the woods; and the knaves did not wait to be surrounded when they knew that Jasper had reached the garrison. Then a man may take a little rest after a summer of hard work, and no impeachment of his goodwill. Besides, the Sarpent is out with them; and if the miscreants are to be found at all, you may trust to his inimity and sight: the first being stronger, and the last nearly, if not quite as good as my own. He loves the skulking vagabonds as little as myself; and, for that matter, I may say that my own feelings towards a Mingo are not much more than the gifts of a Delaware grafted on a Christian stock. No, no, I thought I would leave the honor this time, if honor there is to be, to the young ensign that commands, who, if he don’t lose his scalp, may boast of his campaign in his letters to his mother when he gets in. I thought I would play idler once in my life.”

“And no one has a better right, if long and faithful service entitles a man to a furlough,” returned the Sergeant kindly. “Mabel will think none the worse of you for preferring her company to the trail of the savages; and, I daresay, will be happy to give you a part of her breakfast if you are inclined to eat. You must not think, girl, however, that the Pathfinder is in the habit of letting prowlers around the fort beat a retreat without hearing the crack of his rifle.”

“If I thought she did, Sergeant, though not much given to showy and parade evolutions, I would shoulder Kildeer and quit the garrison before her pretty eyes had time to frown. No, no; Mabel knows me better, though we are but new acquaintances, for there has been no want of Mingos to enliven the short march we have already made in company.”

“It would need a great deal of testimony, Pathfinder, to make me think ill of you in any way, and more than all in the way you mention,” returned Mabel, coloring with the sincere earnestness with which she endeavored to remove any suspicion to the contrary from his mind. “Both father and daughter, I believe, owe you their lives, and believe me, that neither will ever forget it.”

“Thank you, Mabel, thank you with all my heart. But I will not take advantage of your ignorance neither, girl, and therefore shall say, I do not think the Mingos would have hurt a hair of your head, had they succeeded by their devilries and contrivances in getting you into their hands. My scalp, and Jasper’s, and Master Cap’s there, and the Sarpent’s too, would sartainly have been smoked; but as for the Sergeant’s daughter, I do not think they would have hurt a hair of her head.”

“And why should I suppose that enemies, known to spare neither women nor children, would have shown more mercy

to me than to another? I feel, Pathfinder, that I owe you my life.”

“I say nay, Mabel; they wouldn’t have had the heart to hurt you. No, not even a fiery Mingo devil would have had the heart to hurt a hair of your head. Bad as I suspect the vampires to be, I do not suspect them of anything so wicked as that. They might have wished you, nay, forced you to become the wife of one of their chiefs, and that would be torment enough to a Christian young woman; but beyond that I do not think even the Mingos themselves would have gone.”

“Well, then, I shall owe my escape from this great misfortune to you,” said Mabel, taking his hard hand into her own frankly and cordially, and certainly in a way to delight the honest guide. “To me it would be a lighter evil to be killed than to become the wife of an Indian.”

“That is her gift, Sergeant,” exclaimed Pathfinder, turning to his old comrade with gratification written on every lineament of his honest countenance, “and it will have its way. I tell the Serpent that no Christianizing will ever make even a Delaware a white man; nor any whooping and yelling convert a pale-face into a red-skin. That is the gift of a young woman born of Christian parents, and it ought to be maintained.”

“You are right, Pathfinder; and so far as Mabel Dunham is concerned, it *shall* be maintained. But it is time to break your fasts; and if you will follow me, brother Cap, I will show you how we poor soldiers live here on a distant frontier.”



## CHAPTER 9.

*Now, my co-mates and partners in exile,  
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court?  
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam.  
AS YOU LIKE IT.*

Sergeant Dunham made no empty vaunt when he gave the promise conveyed in the closing words of the last chapter. Notwithstanding the remote frontier position of the post they who lived at it enjoyed a table that, in many respects, kings and princes might have envied. At the Period of our tale, and, indeed, for half a century later, the whole of that vast region which has been called the West, or the new countries since the war of the revolution, lay a comparatively unpeopled desert, teeming with all the living productions of nature that properly belonged to the climate, man and the domestic animals excepted. The few Indians that roamed its forests then could produce no visible effects on the abundance of the game; and the scattered garrisons, or occasional hunters, that here and there were to be met with on that vast surface, had no other influence than the bee on the buckwheat field, or the humming-bird on the flower.

The marvels that have descended to our own times, in the way of tradition, concerning the quantities of beasts, birds, and fishes that were then to be met with, on the shores of the great lakes in particular, are known to be sustained by the experience of living men, else might we hesitate about relating them; but having been eye-witnesses of some of these prodigies, our office shall be discharged with the confidence that certainty can impart. Oswego was particularly well placed to keep the larder of an epicure amply supplied. Fish of various sorts abounded in its river, and the sportsman had only to cast his line to haul in a bass or some other member of the finny tribe, which then peopled the waters, as the air above the swamps of this fruitful latitude are known to be filled with insects. Among others was the salmon of the lakes, a variety of that well-known species, that is scarcely inferior to the delicious salmon of northern Europe. Of the different migratory birds that frequent forests and waters, there was the same affluence, hundreds of acres of geese and ducks being often seen at a time in the great bays that indent the shores of the lake. Deer, bears, rabbits, and squirrels, with divers other quadrupeds, among which was sometimes included the elk, or moose, helped to complete the sum of the natural supplies on which all the posts depended, more or less, to relieve the unavoidable privations of their remote frontier positions.

In a place where viands that would elsewhere be deemed great luxuries were so abundant, no one was excluded from their enjoyment. The meanest individual at Oswego habitually feasted on game that would have formed the boast of a Parisian table; and it was no more than a healthful commentary on the caprices of taste, and of the waywardness of human desires, that the very diet which in other scenes would have been deemed the subject of envy and repinings got to pall on the appetite. The coarse and regular food of the army, which it became necessary to husband on account of the difficulty of transportation, rose in the estimation of the common soldier; and at any time he would cheerfully desert his venison, and ducks, and pigeons, and salmon, to banquet on the sweets of pickled pork, stringy turnips, and half-cooked cabbage.

The table of Sergeant Dunham, as a matter of course, partook of the abundance and luxuries of the frontier, as well as of its privations. A delicious broiled salmon smoked on a homely platter, hot venison steaks sent up their appetizing odors, and several dishes of cold meats, all of which were composed of game, had been set before the guests, in honor of the newly arrived visitors, and in vindication of the old soldier's hospitality.

"You do not seem to be on short allowance in this quarter of the world, Sergeant," said Cap, after he had got fairly initiated into the mysteries of the different dishes; "your salmon might satisfy a Scotsman."

"It fails to do it, notwithstanding, brother Cap; for among two or three hundred of the fellows that we have in this garrison there are not half a dozen who will not swear that the fish is unfit to be eaten. Even some of the lads, who never tasted venison except as poachers at home, turn up their noses at the fattest haunches that we get here."

"Ay, that is Christian natur'," put in Pathfinder; "and I must say it is none to its credit. Now, a red-skin never repines, but is always thankful for the food he gets, whether it be fat or lean, venison or bear, wild turkey's breast or wild goose's wing. To the shame of us white men be it said, that we look upon blessings without satisfaction, and consider trifling evils as matters of great account."

"It is so with the 55th, as I can answer, though I cannot say as much for their Christianity," returned the Sergeant. "Even the major himself, old Duncan of Lundie, will sometimes swear that an oatmeal cake is better fare than the Oswego bass, and sigh for a swallow of Highland water, when, if so minded, he has the whole of Ontario to quench his thirst in."

"Has Major Duncan a wife and children?" asked Mabel, whose thoughts naturally turned towards her own sex in her new situation.

"Not he, girl; though they do say that he has a betrothed at home. The lady, it seems, is willing to wait, rather than suffer the hardships of service in this wild region; all of which, brother Cap, is not according to my notions of a woman's duties. Your sister thought differently."

"I hope, Sergeant, you do not think of Mabel for a soldier's wife," returned Cap gravely. "Our family has done its share in that way already, and it's high time that the sea was again remembered."

"I do not think of finding a husband for the girl in the 55th, or any other regiment, I can promise you, brother; though I do think it getting to be time that the child were respectably married."

"Father!"

"Tis not their gifts, Sergeant, to talk of these matters in so open a manner," said the guide; "for I've seen it verified by experience, that he who would follow the trail of a virgin's good-will must not go shouting out his thoughts behind her. So, if you please, we will talk of something else."

"Well, then, brother Cap, I hope that bit of a cold roasted pig is to your mind; you seem to fancy the food."

"Ay, ay; give me civilized grub if I must eat," returned the pertinacious seaman. "Venison is well enough for your inland sailors, but we of the ocean like a little of that which we understand."

Here Pathfinder laid down his knife and fork, and indulged in a hearty laugh, though in his always silent manner; then he asked, with a little curiosity in his manner —

"Don't, you miss the skin, Master Cap? don't you miss the skin?"

"It would have been better for its jacket, I think myself, Pathfinder; but I suppose it is a fashion of the woods to serve up shoats in this style."

"Well, well, a man may go round the 'arth and not know everything. If you had had the skinning of that pig, Master Cap, it would have left you sore hands. The cratur' is a hedgehog!"

"Blast me, if I thought it wholesome natural pork either!" returned Cap. "But then I believed even a pig might lose some of its good qualities up hereaway in the woods."

"If the skinning of it, brother, does not fall to my duty. Pathfinder, I hope you didn't find Mabel disobedient on the march?"

"Not she, not she. If Mabel is only half as well satisfied with Jasper and Pathfinder as the Pathfinder and Jasper are satisfied with her, Sergeant, we shall be friends for the remainder of our days."

As the guide spoke, he turned his eyes towards the blushing girl, with a sort of innocent desire to know her opinion; and then, with an inborn delicacy, which proved he was far superior to the vulgar desire to invade the sanctity of feminine feeling, he looked at his plate, and seemed to regret his own boldness.

"Well, well, we must remember that women are not men, my friend," resumed the Sergeant, "and make proper allowances for nature and education. A recruit is not a veteran. Any man knows that it takes longer to make a good soldier than it takes to make anything else."

"This is new doctrine, Sergeant," said Cap with some spirit. "We old seamen are apt to think that six soldiers, ay, and capital soldiers too, might be made while one sailor is getting his education."

"Ay, brother Cap, I've seen something of the opinions which seafaring men have of themselves," returned the brother-in-law, with a smile as bland as comported with his saturnine features; "for I was many years one of the garrison in a seaport. You and I have conversed on the subject before and I'm afraid we shall never agree. But if you wish to know what the difference is between a real soldier and man in what I should call a state of nature, you have only to look at a battalion of the 55th on parade this afternoon, and then, when you get back to York, examine one of the militia regiments making its greatest efforts."

"Well, to my eye, Sergeant, there is very little difference, not more than you'll find between a brig and a snow. To me

they seem alike: all scarlet, and feathers, and powder, and pipeclay."

"So much, sir, for the judgment of a sailor," returned the Sergeant with dignity; "but perhaps you are not aware that it requires a year to teach a true soldier how to eat?"

"So much the worse for him. The militia know how to eat at starting; for I have often heard that, on their marches, they commonly eat all before them, even if they do nothing else."

"They have their gifts, I suppose, like other men," observed Pathfinder, with a view to preserve the peace, which was evidently in some danger of being broken by the obstinate predilection of each of the disputants in favor of his own calling; "and when a man has his gift from Providence, it is commonly idle to endeavor to bear up against it. The 55th, Sergeant, is a judicious regiment in the way of eating, as I know from having been so long in its company, though I daresay militia corps could be found that would outdo them in feats of that natur' too."

"Uncle;" said Mabel, "if you have breakfasted, I will thank you to go out upon the bastion with me again. We have neither of us half seen the lake, and it would be hardly seemly for a young woman to be walking about the fort, the first day of her arrival, quite alone."

Cap understood the motive of Mabel; and having, at the bottom, a hearty friendship for his brother-in-law, he was willing enough to defer the argument until they had been longer together, for the idea of abandoning it altogether never crossed the mind of one so dogmatical and obstinate. He accordingly accompanied his niece, leaving Sergeant Dunham and his friend, the Pathfinder, alone together. As soon as his adversary had beat a retreat, the Sergeant, who did not quite so well understand the manoeuvre of his daughter, turned to his companion, and, with a smile which was not without triumph, he remarked —

"The army, Pathfinder, has never yet done itself justice in the way of asserting its rights; and though modesty becomes a man, whether he is in a red coat or a black one, or, for that matter, in his shirt-sleeves, I don't like to let a good opportunity slip of saying a word in its behalf. Well, my friend," laying his own hand on one of the Pathfinder's, and giving it a hearty squeeze, "how do you like the girl?"

"You have reason to be proud of her, Sergeant. I have seen many of her sex, and some that were great and beautiful; but never before did I meet with one in whom I thought Providence had so well balanced the different gifts."

"And the good opinion, I can tell you, Pathfinder, is mutual. She told me last night all about your coolness, and spirit, and kindness — particularly the last, for kindness counts for more than half with females, my friend — and the first inspection seems to give satisfaction on both sides. Brush up the uniform, and pay a little more attention to the outside, Pathfinder, and you will have the girl heart and hand."

"Nay, nay, Sergeant, I've forgotten nothing that you have told me, and grudge no reasonable pains to make myself as pleasant in the eyes of Mabel as she is getting to be in mine. I cleaned and brightened up Killdeer this morning as soon as the sun rose; and, in my judgment, the piece never looked better than it does at this very moment."

"That is according to your hunting notions, Pathfinder; but firearms should sparkle and glitter in the sun, and I never yet could see any beauty in a clouded barrel."

"Lord Howe thought otherwise, Sergeant; and he was accounted a good soldier."

"Very true; his lordship had all the barrels of his regiment darkened, and what good came of it? You can see his 'scutcheon hanging in the English church at Albany. No, no, my worthy friend, a soldier should be a soldier, and at no time ought he to be ashamed or afraid to carry about him the signs and symbols of his honorable trade. Had you much discourse with Mabel, Pathfinder, as you came along in the canoe?"

"There was not much opportunity, Sergeant, and then I found myself so much beneath her in ideas, that I was afraid to speak of much beyond what belonged to my own gifts."

"Therein you are partly right and partly wrong, my friend. Women love trifling discourse, though they like to have most of it to themselves. Now you know I'm a man that do not loosen my tongue at every giddy thought; and yet there were days when I could see that Mabel's mother thought none the worse of me because I descended a little from my manhood. It is true, I was twenty-two years younger then than I am to-day; and, moreover, instead of being the oldest sergeant in the regiment, I was the youngest. Dignity is commanding and useful, and there is no getting on without it, as respects the men; but if you would be thoroughly esteemed by a woman, it is necessary to condescend a little on occasions."

"Ah's me, Sergeant, I sometimes fear it will never do."

"Why do you think so discouragingly of a matter on which I thought both our minds were made up?"

"We did agree, if Mabel should prove what you told me she was, and if the girl could fancy a rude hunter and guide, that I should quit some of my wandering ways, and try to humanize my mind down to a wife and children. But since I have seen the girl, I will own that many misgivings have come over me."

"How's this?" interrupted the Sergeant sternly; "did I not understand you to say that you were pleased? — and is Mabel a young woman to disappoint expectation?"

"Ah, Sergeant, it is not Mabel that I distrust, but myself. I am but a poor ignorant woodsman, after all; and perhaps I'm not, in truth, as good as even you and I may think me."

"If you doubt your own judgment of yourself, Pathfinder, I beg you will not doubt mine. Am I not accustomed to judge men's character? and am I often deceived? Ask Major Duncan, sir, if you desire any assurances in this particular."

"But, Sergeant, we have long been friends; have fit side by side a dozen times, and have done each other many services. When this is the case, men are apt to think over kindly of each other; and I fear me that the daughter may not be so likely to view a plain ignorant hunter as favorably as the father does."

"Tut, tut, Pathfinder! You don't know yourself, man, and may put all faith in my judgment. In the first place you have experience; and, as all girls must want that, no prudent young woman would overlook such a qualification. Then you are not one of the coxcombs that strut about when they first join a regiment; but a man who has seen service, and who carries the marks of it on his person and countenance. I daresay you have been under fire some thirty or forty times, counting all the skirmishes and ambushes that you've seen."

"All of that, Sergeant, all of that; but what will it avail in gaining the good-will of a tender-hearted young female?"

"It will gain the day. Experience in the field is as good in love as in war. But you are as honest-hearted and as loyal a subject as the king can boast of — God bless him!"

"That may be too; but I'm afeared I'm too rude and too old and too wild like to suit the fancy of such a young and delicate girl as Mabel, who has been unused to our wilderness ways, and may think the settlements better suited to her gifts and inclinations."

"These are new misgivings for you, my friend; and I wonder they were never paraded before."

"Because I never knew my own worthlessness, perhaps, until I saw Mabel. I have travelled with some as fair, and have guided them through the forest, and seen them in their perils and in their gladness; but they were always too much above me to make me think of them as more than so many feeble ones I was bound to protect and defend. The case is now different. Mabel and I are so nearly alike, that I feel weighed down with a load that is hard to bear, at finding us so unlike. I do wish, Sergeant, that I was ten years younger, more comely to look at, and better suited to please a handsome young woman's fancy."

"Cheer up, my brave friend, and trust to a father's knowledge of womankind. Mabel half loves you already, and a fortnight's intercourse and kindness, down among the islands yonder will close ranks with the other half. The girl as much as told me this herself last night."

"Can this be so, Sergeant?" said the guide, whose meek and modest nature shrank from viewing himself in colors so favorable. "Can this be truly so? I am but a poor hunter and Mabel, I see, is fit to be an officer's lady. Do you think the girl will consent to quit all her beloved settlement usages, and her visitings and church-goings, to dwell with a plain guide and hunter up hereaway in the woods? Will she not in the end, crave her old ways, and a better man?"

"A better man, Pathfinder, would be hard to find," returned the father. "As for town usages, they are soon forgotten in the freedom of the forest, and Mabel has just spirit enough to dwell on a frontier. I've not planned this marriage, my friend, without thinking it over, as a general does his campaign. At first, I thought of bringing you into the regiment, that you might succeed me when I retire, which must be sooner or later; but on reflection, Pathfinder, I think you are scarcely fitted for the office. Still, if not a soldier in all the meanings of the word, you are a soldier in its best meaning, and I know that you have the good-will of every officer in the corps. As long as I live, Mabel can dwell with me, and you will always have a home when you return from your scoutings and marches."

"This is very pleasant to think of, Sergeant, if the girl can only come into our wishes with good-will. But, ah's me! It does not seem that one like myself can ever be agreeable in her handsome eyes. If I were younger, and more comely, now, as Jasper Western is, for instance, there might be a chance — yes, then, indeed, there might be some chance."

"That for Jasper Eau-douce, and every younker of them in or about the fort!" returned the Sergeant, snapping his fingers. "If not actually a younger, you are a younger-looking, ay, and a better-looking man than the *Scud's* master —"

"Anan?" said Pathfinder, looking up at his companion with an expression of doubt, as if he did not understand his meaning.

"I say if not actually younger in days and years, you look more hardy and like whipcord than Jasper, or any of them; and there will be more of you, thirty years hence, than of all of them put together. A good conscience will keep one like you a mere boy all his life."

"Jasper has as clear a conscience as any youth I know, Sergeant, and is as likely to wear on that account as any in the colony."

"Then you are my friend," squeezing the other's hand, "my tried, sworn, and constant friend."

"Yes, we have been friends, Sergeant, near twenty years before Mabel was born."

"True enough; before Mabel was born, we were well-tried friends; and the hussy would never dream of refusing to marry a man who was her father's friend before she was born."

"We don't know, Sergeant, we don't know. Like loves like. The young prefer the young for companions, and the old the old."

"Not for wives, Pathfinder; I never knew an old man, now, who had an objection to a young wife. Then you are respected and esteemed by every officer in the fort, as I have said already, and it will please her fancy to like a man that every one else likes."

"I hope I have no enemies but the Mingos," returned the guide, stroking down his hair meekly and speaking thoughtfully. "I've tried to do right, and that ought to make friends, though it sometimes fails."

"And you may be said to keep the best company; for even old Duncan of Lundie is glad to see you, and you pass hours in his society. Of all the guides, he confides most in you."

"Ay, even greater than he is have marched by my side for days, and have conversed with me as if I were their brother; but, Sergeant, I have never been puffed up by their company, for I know that the woods often bring men to a level who would not be so in the settlements."

"And you are known to be the greatest rifle shot that ever pulled trigger in all this region."

"If Mabel could fancy a man for that, I might have no great reason to despair; and yet, Sergeant, I sometimes think that it is all as much owing to Killdeer as to any skill of my own. It is sartainly a wonderful piece, and might do as much in the hands of another."

"That is your own humble opinion of yourself, Pathfinder; but we have seen too many fail with the same weapon, and you succeed too often with the rifles of other men, to allow me to agree with you. We will get up a shooting match in a day or two, when you can show your skill, and when Mabel will form some judgment concerning your true character."

"Will that be fair, Sergeant? Everybody knows that Killdeer seldom misses; and ought we to make a trial of this sort when we all know what must be the result?"

"Tut, tut, man! I foresee I must do half this courting for you. For one who is always inside of the smoke in a skirmish, you are the faintest-hearted suitor I ever met with. Remember, Mabel comes of a bold stock; and the girl will be as likely to admire a man as her mother was before her."

Here the Sergeant arose, and proceeded to attend to his never-ceasing duties, without apology; the terms on which the guide stood with all in the garrison rendering this freedom quite a matter of course.

The reader will have gathered from the conversation just related, one of the plans that Sergeant Dunham had in view in causing his daughter to be brought to the frontier. Although necessarily much weaned from the caresses and blandishments that had rendered his child so dear to him during the first year or two of his widowerhood, he had still a strong but somewhat latent love for her. Accustomed to command and to obey, without being questioned himself or questioning others, concerning the reasonableness of the mandates, he was perhaps too much disposed to believe that his daughter would marry the man he might select, while he was far from being disposed to do violence to her wishes. The fact was; few knew the Pathfinder intimately without secretly believing him to be one of extraordinary qualities. Ever the same, simple-minded, faithful, utterly without fear, and yet prudent, foremost in all warrantable enterprises, or what the opinion

of the day considered as such, and never engaged in anything to call a blush to his cheek or censure on his acts, it was not possible to live much with this being and not feel respect and admiration for him which had no reference to his position in life. The most surprising peculiarity about the man himself was the entire indifference with which he regarded all distinctions which did not depend on personal merit. He was respectful to his superiors from habit; but had often been known to correct their mistakes and to reprove their vices with a fearlessness that proved how essentially he regarded the more material points, and with a natural discrimination that appeared to set education at defiance. In short, a disbeliever in the ability of man to distinguish between good and evil without the aid of instruction, would have been staggered by the character of this extraordinary inhabitant of the frontier. His feelings appeared to possess the freshness and nature of the forest in which he passed so much of his time; and no casuist could have made clearer decisions in matters relating to right and wrong; and yet he was not without his prejudices, which, though few, and colored by the character and usages of the individual, were deep-rooted, and almost formed a part of his nature. But the most striking feature about the moral organization of Pathfinder was his beautiful and unerring sense of justice. This noble trait — and without it no man can be truly great, with it no man other than respectable — probably had its unseen influence on all who associated with him; for the common and unprincipled brawler of the camp had been known to return from an expedition made in his company rebuked by his sentiments, softened by his language, and improved by his example. As might have been expected, with so elevated a quality his fidelity was like the immovable rock; treachery in him was classed among the things which are impossible; and as he seldom retired before his enemies, so was he never known, under any circumstances that admitted of an alternative, to abandon a friend. The affinities of such a character were, as a matter of course, those of like for like. His associates and intimates, though more or less determined by chance, were generally of the highest order as to moral propensities; for he appeared to possess a species of instinctive discrimination, which led him, insensibly to himself, most probably, to cling closest to those whose characters would best reward his friendship. In short, it was said of the Pathfinder, by one accustomed to study his fellows, that he was a fair example of what a just-minded and pure man might be, while untempted by unruly or ambitious desires, and left to follow the bias of his feelings, amid the solitary grandeur and ennobling influences of a sublime nature; neither led aside by the inducements which influence all to do evil amid the incentives of civilization, nor forgetful of the Almighty Being whose spirit pervades the wilderness as well as the towns.

Such was the man whom Sergeant Dunham had selected as the husband of Mabel. In making this choice, he had not been as much governed by a clear and judicious view of the merits of the individual, perhaps, as by his own likings; still no one knew the Pathfinder so intimately as himself without always conceding to the honest guide a high place in his esteem on account of these very virtues. That his daughter could find any serious objections to the match the old soldier did not apprehend; while, on the other hand, he saw many advantages to himself in dim perspective, connected with the decline of his days, and an evening of life passed among descendants who were equally dear to him through both parents. He had first made the proposition to his friend, who had listened to it kindly, but who, the Sergeant was now pleased to find, already betrayed a willingness to come into his own views that was proportioned to the doubts and misgivings proceeding from his humble distrust of himself.





## CHAPTER 10.

*Think not I love him, though I ask for him;  
'Tis but a peevish boy:— yet he talks well —  
But what care I for words?*

A week passed in the usual routine of a garrison. Mabel was becoming used to a situation that, at first she had found not only novel, but a little irksome; and the officers and men in their turn, gradually familiarized to the presence of a young and blooming girl, whose attire and carriage had that air of modest gentility about them which she had obtained in the family of her patroness, annoyed her less by their ill-concealed admiration, while they gratified her by the respect which, she was fain to think, they paid her on account of her father; but which, in truth, was more to be attributed to her own modest but spirited deportment, than to any deference for the worthy Sergeant.

Acquaintances made in a forest, or in any circumstances of unusual excitement, soon attain their limits. Mabel found one week's residence at Oswego sufficient to determine her as to those with whom she might be intimate and those whom she ought to avoid. The sort of neutral position occupied by her father, who was not an officer, while he was so much more than a common soldier, by keeping her aloof from the two great classes of military life, lessened the number of those whom she was compelled to know, and made the duty of decision comparatively easy. Still she soon discovered that there were a few, even among those that could aspire to a seat at the Commandant's table, who were disposed to overlook the halbert for the novelty of a well-turned figure and of a pretty, winning face; and by the end of the first two or three days she had admirers even among the gentlemen. The Quartermaster, in particular, a middle-aged soldier, who had more than once tried the blessings of matrimony already, but was now a widower, was evidently disposed to increase his intimacy with the Sergeant, though their duties often brought them together; and the youngsters among his messmates did not fail to note that this man of method, who was a Scotsman of the name of Muir, was much more frequent in his visits to the quarters of his subordinate than had formerly been his wont. A laugh, or a joke, in honor of the "Sergeant's daughter," however, limited their strictures; though "Mabel Dunham" was soon a toast that even the ensign, or the lieutenant, did not disdain to give.

At the end of the week, Duncan of Lundie sent for Sergeant Dunham, after evening roll-call, on business of a nature that, it was understood, required a personal conference. The old veteran dwelt in a movable hut, which, being placed on trucks, he could order to be wheeled about at pleasure, sometimes living in one part of the area within the fort, and sometimes in another. On the present occasion, he had made a halt near the centre; and there he was found by his subordinate, who was admitted to his presence without any delay or dancing attendance in an ante-chamber. In point of fact, there was very little difference in the quality of the accommodations allowed to the officers and those allowed to the men, the former being merely granted the most room.

"Walk in, Sergeant, walk in, my good friend," said old Lundie heartily, as his inferior stood in a respectful attitude at the door of a sort of library and bedroom into which he had been ushered;—"walk in, and take a seat on that stool. I have sent for you, man; to discuss anything but rosters and pay-rolls this evening. It is now many years since we have been comrades, and 'auld lang syne' should count for something, even between a major and his orderly, a Scot and a Yankee. Sit ye down, man, and just put yourself at your ease. It has been a fine day, Sergeant."

"It has indeed, Major Duncan," returned the other, who, though he complied so far as to take the seat, was much too practised not to understand the degree of respect it was necessary to maintain in his manner; "a very fine day, sir, it has been and we may look for more of them at this season."

"I hope so with all my heart. The crops look well as it is, man, and you'll be finding that the 55th make almost as good farmers as soldiers. I never saw better potatoes in Scotland than we are likely to have in that new patch of ours."

"They promise a good yield, Major Duncan; and, in that light, a more comfortable winter than the last."

"Life is progressive, Sergeant, in its comforts as well as in its need of them. We grow old, and I begin to think it time to retire and settle in life. I feel that my working days are nearly over."

"The king, God bless him! sir, has much good service in your honor yet."

"It may be so, Sergeant Dunham, especially if he should happen to have a spare lieutenant-colonelcy left."

"The 55th will be honored the day that commission is given to Duncan of Lundie, sir."

"And Duncan of Lundie will be honored the day he receives it. But, Sergeant, if you have never had a lieutenant-colonelcy, you have had a good wife, and that is the next thing to rank in making a man happy."

"I have been married, Major Duncan; but it is now a long time since I have had no drawback on the love I bear his majesty and my duty."

"What, man! not even the love you bear that active little round-limbed, rosy-cheeked daughter that I have seen in the fort these last few days! Out upon you, Sergeant! old fellow as I am, I could almost love that little lassie myself, and send the lieutenant-colonelcy to the devil."

"We all know where Major Duncan's heart is, and that is in Scotland, where a beautiful lady is ready and willing to make him happy, as soon as his own sense of duty shall permit."

"Ay, hope is ever a far-off thing, Sergeant," returned the superior, a shade of melancholy passing over his hard Scottish features as he spoke; "and bonnie Scotland is a far-off country. Well, if we have no heather and oatmeal in this region, we have venison for the killing of it and salmon as plenty as at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Is it true, Sergeant, that the men complain of having been over-venisoned and over-pigeoned of late?"

"Not for some weeks, Major Duncan, for neither deer nor birds are so plenty at this season as they have been. They begin to throw their remarks about concerning the salmon, but I trust we shall get through the summer without any serious disturbance on the score of food. The Scotch in the battalion do, indeed, talk more than is prudent of their want of oatmeal, grumbling occasionally of our wheaten bread."

"Ah, that is human nature, Sergeant! pure, unadulterated Scotch human nature. A cake, man, to say the truth, is an agreeable morsel, and I often see the time when I pine for a bite myself."

"If the feeling gets to be troublesome, Major Duncan — in the men, I mean, sir, for I would not think of saying so disrespectful a thing to your honor — but if the men ever pine seriously for their natural food, I would humbly recommend that some oatmeal be imported, or prepared in this country for them, and I think we shall hear no more of it. A very little would answer for a cure, sir."

"You are a wag, Sergeant; but hang me if I am sure you are not right. There may be sweeter things in this world, after all, than oatmeal. You have a sweet daughter, Dunham, for one."

"The girl is like her mother, Major Duncan, and will pass inspection," said the Sergeant proudly. "Neither was brought up on anything better than good American flour. The girl will pass inspection, sir."

"That would she, I'll answer for it. Well, I may as well come to the point at once, man, and bring up my reserve into the front of the battle. Here is Davy Muir, the quartermaster, disposed to make your daughter his wife, and he has just got me to open the matter to you, being fearful of compromising his own dignity; and I may as well add that half the youngsters in the fort toast her, and talk of her from morning till night."

"She is much honored, sir," returned the father stiffly; "but I trust the gentlemen will find something more worthy of them to talk about ere long. I hope to see her the wife of an honest man before many weeks, sir."

"Yes, Davy is an honest man, and that is more than can be said for all in the quartermaster's department, I'm thinking, Sergeant," returned Lundie, with a slight smile. "Well, then may I tell the Cupid-stricken youth that the matter is as good as settled?"

"I thank your honor; but Mabel is betrothed to another."

"The devil she is! That will produce a stir in the fort; though I'm not sorry to hear it either, for, to be frank with you, Sergeant, I'm no great admirer of unequal matches."

"I think with your honor, and have no desire to see my daughter an officer's lady. If she can get as high as her mother was before her, it ought to satisfy any reasonable woman."

"And may I ask, Sergeant, who is the lucky man that you intend to call son-in-law?"

"The Pathfinder, your honor."

"Pathfinder!"

"The same, Major Duncan; and in naming him to you, I give you his whole history. No one is better known on this frontier than my honest, brave, true-hearted friend."

"All that is true enough; but is he, after all, the sort of person to make a girl of twenty happy?"

"Why not, your honor? The man is at the head of his calling. There is no other guide or scout connected with the army who has half the reputation of Pathfinder, or who deserves to have it half as well."

"Very true, Sergeant; but is the reputation of a scout exactly the sort of renown to captivate a girl's fancy?"

"Talking of girls' fancies, sir, is in my humble opinion much like talking of a recruit's judgment. If we were to take the movements of the awkward squad, sir, as a guide, we should never form a decent line in battalion, Major Duncan."

"But your daughter has nothing awkward about her: for a genteeler girl of her class could not be found in old Albion itself. Is she of your way of thinking in this matter? — though I suppose she must be, as you say she is betrothed."

"We have not yet conversed on the subject, your honor; but I consider her mind as good as made up, from several little circumstances which might be named."

"And what are these circumstances, Sergeant?" asked the Major, who began to take more interest than he had at first felt on the subject. "I confess a little curiosity to know something about a woman's mind, being, as you know, a bachelor myself."

"Why, your honor, when I speak of the Pathfinder to the girl, she always looks me full in the face; chimes in with everything I say in his favor, and has a frank open way with her, which says as much as if she half considered him already as a husband."

"Hum! and these signs, you think, Dunham, are faithful tokens of your daughter's feelings?"

"I do, your honor, for they strike me as natural. When I find a man, sir, who looks me full in the face, while he praises an officer — for, begging your honor's pardon, the men will sometimes pass their strictures on their betters — and when I find a man looking me in the eyes as he praises his captain, I always set it down that the fellow is honest, and means what he says."

"Is there not some material difference in the age of the intended bridegroom and that of his pretty bride, Sergeant?"

"You are quite right, sir; Pathfinder is well advanced towards forty, and Mabel has every prospect of happiness that a young woman can derive from the certainty of possessing an experienced husband. I was quite forty myself, your honor, when I married her mother."

"But will your daughter be as likely to admire a green hunting-shirt, such as that our worthy guide wears, with a fox-skin cap, as the smart uniform of the 55th?"

"Perhaps not, sir; and therefore she will have the merit of self-denial, which always makes a young woman wiser and better."

"And are you not afraid that she may be left a widow while still a young woman? what between wild beasts, and wilder savages, Pathfinder may be said to carry his life in his hand."

"Every bullet has its billet, Lundie," for so the Major was fond of being called in his moments of condescension, and when not engaged in military affairs; "and no man in the 55th can call himself beyond or above the chances of sudden death. In that particular, Mabel would gain nothing by a change. Besides, sir, if I may speak freely on such a subject, I much doubt if ever Pathfinder dies in battle, or by any of the sudden chances of the wilderness."

"And why so, Sergeant?" asked the Major. "He is a soldier, so far as danger is concerned, and one that is much more than usually exposed; and, being free of his person, why should he expect to escape when others do not?"

"I do not believe, your honor, that the Pathfinder considers his own chances better than any one's else, but the man will never die by a bullet. I have seen him so often handling his rifle with as much composure as if it were a shepherd's crook, in the midst of the heaviest showers of bullets, and under so many extraordinary circumstances, that I do not think Providence means he should ever fall in that manner. And yet, if there be a man in his Majesty's dominions who really deserves such a death, it is Pathfinder."

"We never know, Sergeant," returned Lundie, with a countenance grave with thought; "and the less we say about it, perhaps, the better. But will your daughter — Mabel, I think, you call her — will Mabel be as willing to accept one who, after all, is a mere hanger-on of the army, as to take one from the service itself? There is no hope of promotion for the guide, Sergeant."

"He is at the head of his corps already, your honor. In short, Mabel has made up her mind on this subject; and, as your

honor has had the condescension to speak to me about Mr. Muir, I trust you will be kind enough to say that the girl is as good as billeted for life."

"Well, well, this is your own matter, and, now — Sergeant Dunham!"

"Your honor," said the other, rising, and giving the customary salute.

"You have been told it is my intention to send you down among the Thousand Islands for the next month. All the old subalterns have had their tours of duty in that quarter — all that I like to trust at least; and it has at length come to your turn. Lieutenant Muir, it is true, claims his right; but, being quartermaster, I do not like to break up well-established arrangements. Are the men drafted?"

"Everything is ready, your honor. The draft is made, and I understood that the canoe which got in last night brought a message to say that the party already below is looking out for the relief."

"It did; and you must sail the day after to-morrow, if not to-morrow night. It will be wise, perhaps, to sail in the dark."

"So Jasper thinks, Major Duncan; and I know no one more to be depended on in such an affair than young Jasper Western."

"Young Jasper Eau-douce!" said Lundie, a slight smile gathering around his usually stern mouth. "Will that lad be of your party, Sergeant?"

"Your honor will remember that the *Scud* never quits port without him."

"True; but all general rules have their exceptions. Have I not seen a seafaring person about the fort within the last few days?"

"No doubt, your honor; it is Master Cap, a brother-in-law of mine, who brought my daughter from below."

"Why not put him in the *Scud* for this cruise, Sergeant, and leave Jasper behind? Your brother-in-law would like the variety of a fresh-water cruise, and you would enjoy more of his company."

"I intended to ask your honor's permission to take him along; but he must go as a volunteer. Jasper is too brave a lad to be turned out of his command without a reason, Major Duncan; and I'm afraid brother Cap despises fresh water too much to do duty on it."

"Quite right, Sergeant, and I leave all this to your own discretion. Eau-douce must retain his command, on second thoughts. You intend that Pathfinder shall also be of the party?"

"If your honor approves of it. There will be service for both the guides, the Indian as well as the white man."

"I think you are right. Well, Sergeant, I wish you good luck in the enterprise; and remember the post is to be destroyed and abandoned when your command is withdrawn. It will have done its work by that time, or we shall have failed entirely, and it is too ticklish a position to be maintained unnecessarily. You can retire."

Sergeant Dunham gave the customary salute, turned on his heels as if they had been pivots, and had got the door nearly drawn to after him, when he was suddenly recalled.

"I had forgotten, Sergeant, the younger officers have begged for a shooting match, and to-morrow has been named for the day. All competitors will be admitted, and the prizes will be a silver-mounted powder horn, a leathern flask ditto," reading from a piece of paper, "as I see by the professional jargon of this bill, and a silk calash for a lady. The latter is to enable the victor to show his gallantry by making an offering of it to her he best loves."

"All very agreeable, your honor, at least to him that succeeds. Is the Pathfinder to be permitted to enter?"

"I do not well see how he can be excluded, if he choose to come forward. Latterly, I have observed that he takes no share in these sports, probably from a conviction of his own unequalled skill."

"That's it, Major Duncan; the honest fellow knows there is not a man on the frontier who can equal him, and he does not wish to spoil the pleasure of others. I think we may trust to his delicacy in anything, sir. Perhaps it may be as well to let him have his own way?"

"In this instance we must, Sergeant. Whether he will be as successful in all others remains to be seen. I wish you good evening, Dunham."

The Sergeant now withdrew, leaving Duncan of Lundie to his own thoughts: that they were not altogether disagreeable was to be inferred from the smiles which occasionally covered a countenance hard and martial in its usual expression, though there were moments in which all its severe sobriety prevailed. Half an hour might have passed, when a tap at the

door was answered by a direction to enter. A middle-aged man, in the dress of an officer, but whose uniform wanted the usual smartness of the profession, made his appearance, and was saluted as "Mr. Muir."

"I have come sir, at your bidding, to know my fortune," said the Quartermaster, in a strong Scotch accent, as soon as he had taken the seat which was proffered to him. "To say the truth to you, Major Duncan, this girl is making as much havoc in the garrison as the French did before Ty: I never witnessed so general a rout in so short a time!"

"Surely, Davy, you don't mean to persuade me that your young and unsophisticated heart is in such a flame, after one week's ignition? Why, man, this is worse than the affair in Scotland, where it was said the heat within was so intense that it just burnt a hole through your own precious body, and left a place for all the lassies to peer in at, to see what the combustible material was worth."

"Ye'll have your own way, Major Duncan; and your father and mother would have theirs before ye, even if the enemy were in the camp. I see nothing so extraordinar' in young people following the bent of their inclinations and wishes."

"But you've followed yours so often, Davy, that I should think by this time it had lost the edge of novelty. Including that informal affair in Scotland, when you were a lad, you've been married four times already."

"Only three, Major, as I hope to get another wife. I've not yet had my number: no, no; only three."

"I'm thinking, Davy, you don't include the first affair I mentioned; that in which there was no parson."

"And why should I Major? The courts decided that it was no marriage; and what more could a man want? The woman took advantage of a slight amorous propensity that may be a weakness in my disposition, perhaps, and inveigled me into a contract which was found to be illegal."

"If I remember right, Muir, there were thought to be two sides to that question, in the time of it?"

"It would be but an indifferent question, my dear Major, that hadn't two sides to it; and I've known many that had three. But the poor woman's dead, and there was no issue; so nothing came of it after all. Then, I was particularly unfortunate with my second wife; I say second, Major, out of deference to you, and on the mere supposition that the first was a marriage at all; but first or second, I was particularly unfortunate with Jeannie Graham, who died in the first lustrum, leaving neither chick nor chiel behind her. I do think, if Jeannie had survived, I never should have turned my thoughts towards another wife."

"But as she did not, you married twice after her death; and are desirous of doing so a third time."

"The truth can never justly be gainsaid, Major Duncan, and I am always ready to avow it. I'm thinking, Lundie, you are melancholar this fine evening?"

"No, Muir, not melancholy absolutely; but a little thoughtful, I confess. I was looking back to my boyish days, when I, the laird's son, and you, the parson's, roamed about our native hills, happy and careless boys, taking little heed to the future; and then have followed some thoughts, that may be a little painful, concerning that future as it has turned out to be."

"Surely, Lundie, ye do not complain of yer portion of it. You've risen to be a major, and will soon be a lieutenant-colonel, if letters tell the truth; while I am just one step higher than when your honored father gave me my first commission, and a poor deevil of a quartermaster."

"And the four wives?"

"Three, Lundie; three only that were legal, even under our own liberal and sanctified laws."

"Well, then, let it be three. Ye know, Davy," said Major Duncan, insensibly dropping into the pronunciation and dialect of his youth, as is much the practice with educated Scotchmen as they warm with a subject that comes near the heart — "ye know, Davy, that my own choice has long been made, and in how anxious and hope-wearied a manner I've waited for that happy hour when I can call the woman I've so long loved a wife; and here have you, without fortune, name, birth, or merit — I mean particular merit —"

"Na, na; dinna say that, Lundie. The Muirs are of gude bluid."

"Well, then, without aught but bluid, ye've wived four times —"

"I tall ye but thrice, Lundie. Ye'll weaken auld friendship if ye call it four."

"Put it at yer own number, Davy; and it's far more than yer share. Our lives have been very different, on the score of matrimony, at least; you must allow that, my old friend."

"And which do you think has been the gainer, Major, speaking as frankly together as we did when lads?"

"Nay, I've nothing to conceal. My days have passed in hope deferred, while yours have passed in —"

"Not in hope realized, I give you mine honor, Major Duncan," interrupted the Quartermaster. "Each new experiment I have thought might prove an advantage; but disappointment seems the lot of man. Ah! this is a vain world of ours, Lundie, it must be owned; and in nothing vainer than in matrimony."

"And yet you are ready to put your neck into the noose for the fifth time?"

"I desire to say, it will be but the fourth, Major Duncan," said the Quartermaster positively; then, instantly changing the expression of his face to one of boyish rapture, he added, "But this Mabel Dunham is a *rara avis*! Our Scotch lassies are fair and pleasant; but it must be owned these colonials are of surpassing comeliness."

"You will do well to recollect your commission and blood, Davy. I believe all four of your wives —"

"I wish my dear Lundie, ye'd be more accurate in yer arithmetic. Three times one make three."

"All three, then, were what might be termed gentlewomen?"

"That's just it, Major. Three were gentlewomen, as you say, and the connections were suitable."

"And the fourth being the daughter of my father's gardener, the connection was unsuitable. But have you no fear that marrying the child of a non-commissioned officer, who is in the same corps with yourself, will have the effect to lessen your consequence in the regiment?"

"That's just been my weakness through life, Major Duncan; for I've always married without regard to consequences. Every man has his besetting sin, and matrimony, I fear, is mine. And now that we have discussed what may be called the principles of the connection, I will just ask if you did me the favor to speak to the Sergeant on the trifling affair?"

"I did, David; and am sorry to say, for your hopes, that I see no great chance of your succeeding."

"Not succeeding! An officer, and a quartermaster in the bargain, and not succeed with a sergeant's daughter!"

"It's just that, Davy."

"And why not, Lundie? Will ye have the goodness to answer just that?"

"The girl is betrothed. Hand plighted, word passed, love pledged — no, hang me if I believe that either; but she is betrothed."

"Well, that's an obstacle, it must be avowed, Major, though it counts for little if the heart is free."

"Quite true; and I think it probable the heart is free in this case; for the intended husband appears to be the choice of the father rather than of the daughter."

"And who may it be, Major?" asked the Quartermaster, who viewed the whole matter with the philosophy and coolness acquired by use. "I do not recollect any plausible suitor that is likely to stand in my way."

"No, you are the only *plausible* suitor on the frontier, Davy. The happy man is Pathfinder."

"Pathfinder, Major Duncan!"

"No more, nor any less, David Muir. Pathfinder is the man; but it may relieve your jealousy a little to know that, in my judgment at least, it is a match of the father's rather than of the daughter's seeking."

"I thought as much!" exclaimed the Quartermaster, drawing a long breath, like one who felt relieved; "it's quite impossible that with my experience in human nature —"

"Particularly hu-woman's nature, David."

"Ye will have yer joke, Lundie, let who will suffer. But I did not think it possible I could be deceived as to the young woman's inclinations, which I think I may boldly pronounce to be altogether above the condition of Pathfinder. As for the individual himself — why, time will show."

"Now, tell me frankly, Davy Muir," said Lundie, stepping short in his walk, and looking the other earnestly in the face with a comical expression of surprise, that rendered the veteran's countenance ridiculously earnest — "do you really suppose a girl like the daughter of Sergeant Dunham can take a serious fancy to a man of your years and appearance, and experience, I might add?"

"Hout, awa', Lundie! ye dinna know the sax, and that's the reason yer unmarried in yer forty-fifth year. It's a fearful time ye've been a bachelor, Major!"

"And what may be your age, Lieutenant Muir, if I may presume to ask so delicate a question?"

"Forty-seven; I'll no' deny it, Lundie; and if I get Mabel, there'll be just a wife for every twa lustrums. But I didna think Sergeant Dunham would be so humble minded as to dream of giving that sweet lass of his to one like the Pathfinder."

"There's no dream about it, Davy; the man is as serious as a soldier about to be flogged."

"Well, well, Major, we are auld friends,"— both ran into the Scotch or avoided it, as they approached or drew away from their younger days, in the dialogue — "and ought to know how to take and give a joke, off duty. It is possible the worthy man has not understood my hints, or he never would have thought of such a thing. The difference between an officer's consort and a guide's woman is as vast as that between the antiquity of Scotland and the antiquity of America. I'm auld blood, too, Lundie."

"Take my word for it Davy, your antiquity will do you no good in this affair; and as for your blood, it is not older than your bones. Well, well, man, ye know the Sergeant's answer; and so ye perceive that my influence, on which ye counted so much, can do nought for ye. Let us take a glass thegither, Davy, for auld acquaintance sake; and then ye'll be doing well to remember the party that marches the morrow, and to forget Mabel Dunham as fast as ever you can."

"Ah, Major! I have always found it easier to forget a wife than to forget a sweetheart. When a couple are fairly married, all is settled but the death, as one may say, which must finally part us all; and it seems to me awfu' irreverent to disturb the departed; whereas there is so much anxiety and hope and felicity in expectation like, with the lassie, that it keeps thought alive."

"That is just my idea of your situation, Davy; for I never supposed you expected any more felicity with either of your wives. Now, I've heard of fellows who were so stupid as to look forward to happiness with their wives even beyond the grave. I drink to your success, or to your speedy recovery from this attack, Lieutenant; and I admonish you to be more cautious in future, as some of these violent cases may yet carry you off."

"Many thanks, dear Major; and a speedy termination to an old courtship, of which I know something. This is real mountain dew, Lundie, and it warms the heart like a gleam of bonnie Scotland. As for the men you've just mentioned, they could have had but one wife a piece; for where there are several, the deeds of the women themselves may carry them different ways. I think a reasonable husband ought to be satisfied with passing his allotted time with any particular wife in this world, and not to go about moping for things unattainable. I'm infinitely obliged to you, Major Duncan, for this and all your other acts of friendship; and if you could but add another, I should think you had not altogether forgotten the play-fellow of your boyhood."

"Well, Davy, if the request be reasonable, and such as a superior ought to grant, out with it, man."

"If ye could only contrive a little service for me, down among the Thousand Isles, for a fortnight or so, I think this matter might be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. Just remember, Lundie, the lassie is the only marriageable white female on this frontier."

"There is always duty for one in your line at a post, however small; but this below can be done by the Sergeant as well as by the Quartermaster-general, and better too."

"But not better than by a regimental officer. There is great waste, in common, among the orderlies."

"I'll think of it, Muir," said the Major, laughing, "and you shall have my answer in the morning. Here will be a fine occasion, man, the morrow, to show yourself off before the lady; you are expert with the rifle, and prizes are to be won. Make up your mind to display your skill, and who knows what may yet happen before the *Scud* sails."

"I'm thinking most of the young men will try their hands in this sport, Major!"

"That will they, and some of the old ones too, if you appear. To keep you in countenance, I'll try a shot or two myself, Davy; and you know I have some name that way."

"It might, indeed, do good. The female heart, Major Duncan, is susceptible in many different modes, and sometimes in a way that the rules of philosophy might reject. Some require a suitor to sit down before them, as it might be, in a regular siege, and only capitulate when the place can hold out no longer; others, again, like to be carried by storm; while there are hussies who can only be caught by leading them into an ambush. The first is the most creditable and officer-like process, perhaps; but I must say I think the last the most pleasing."

"An opinion formed from experience, out of all question. And what of the storming parties?"

“They may do for younger men, Lundie,” returned the Quartermaster, rising and winking, a liberty that he often took with his commanding officer on the score of a long intimacy; “every period of life has its necessities, and at forty-seven it’s just as well to trust a little to the head. I wish you a very good even, Major Duncan, and freedom from gout, with a sweet and refreshing sleep.”

“The same to yourself, Mr. Muir, with many thanks. Remember the passage of arms for the morrow.”

The Quartermaster withdrew, leaving Lundie in his library to reflect on what had just passed. Use had so accustomed Major Duncan to Lieutenant Muir and all his traits and humors, that the conduct of the latter did not strike the former with the same force as it will probably the reader. In truth, while all men act under one common law that is termed nature, the varieties in their dispositions, modes of judging, feelings, and selfishness are infinite.





## CHAPTER 11.

*Compel the hawke to sit that is unmann'd,  
Or make the hound, untaught, to draw the deere,  
Or bring the free against his will in band,  
Or move the sad a pleasant tale to heere,  
Your time is lost, and you no whit the neere!  
So love ne leernes, of force the heart to knit:  
She serves but those that feel sweet fancies' fit.*  
MIRROR FOR MAGISTRATES.

It is not often that hope is rewarded by fruition so completely as the wishes of the young men of the garrison were met by the state of the weather on the succeeding day. The heats of summer were little felt at Oswego at the period of which we are writing; for the shade of the forest, added to the refreshing breezes from the lake, so far reduced the influence of the sun as to render the nights always cool and the days seldom oppressive.

It was now September, a month in which the strong gales of the coast often appear to force themselves across the country as far as the great lakes, where the inland sailor sometimes feels that genial influence which characterizes the winds of the ocean invigorating his frame, cheering his spirits, and arousing his moral force. Such a day was that on which the garrison of Oswego assembled to witness what its commander had jocularly called a "passage of arms." Lundie was a scholar in military matters at least, and it was one of his sources of honest pride to direct the reading and thoughts of the young men under his orders to the more intellectual parts of their profession. For one in his situation, his library was both good and extensive, and its books were freely lent to all who desired to use them. Among other whims that had found their way into the garrison through these means, was a relish for the sort of amusement in which it was now about to indulge; and around which some chronicles of the days of chivalry had induced them to throw a parade and romance not unsuited to the characters and habits of soldiers, or to the insulated and wild post occupied by this particular garrison. While so earnestly bent on pleasure, however, they on whom that duty devolved did not neglect the safety of the garrison. One standing on the ramparts of the fort, and gazing on the waste of glittering water that bounded the view all along the northern horizon, and on the slumbering and seemingly boundless forest which filled the other half of the panorama, would have fancied the spot the very abode of peacefulness and security; but Duncan of Lundie too well knew that the woods might, at any moment, give up their hundreds, bent on the destruction of the fort and all it contained; and that even the treacherous lake offered a highway of easy approach by which his more civilized and scarcely less wily foes, the French, could come upon him at an unguarded moment. Parties were sent out under old and vigilant officers, men who cared little for the sports of the day, to scour the forest; and one entire company held the fort, under arms, with orders to maintain a vigilance as strict as if an enemy of superior force was known to be near. With these precautions, the remainder of the officers and men abandoned themselves, without apprehension, to the business of the morning.

The spot selected for the sports was a sort of esplanade, a little west of the fort, and on the immediate bank of the lake. It had been cleared of its trees and stumps, that it might answer the purpose of a parade-ground, as it possessed the advantages of having its rear protected by the water, and one of its flanks by the works. Men drilling on it could be attacked, consequently, on two sides only; and as the cleared space beyond it, in the direction of the west and south, was large, any assailants would be compelled to quit the cover of the woods before they could make an approach sufficiently near to render them dangerous.

Although the regular arms of the regiment were muskets, some fifty rifles were produced on the present occasion. Every officer had one as a part of his private provision for amusement; many belonged to the scouts and friendly Indians, of whom more or less were always hanging about the fort; and there was a public provision of them for the use of those who followed the game with the express object of obtaining supplies. Among those who carried the weapon were some five or six, who had reputation for knowing how to use it particularly well — so well, indeed, as to have given them a celebrity on the frontier; twice that number who were believed to be much better than common; and many who would have been thought expert in almost any situation but the precise one in which they now happened to be placed.

The distance was a hundred yards, and the weapon was to be used without a rest; the target, a board, with the customary circular lines in white paint, having the bull's-eye in the centre. The first trials in skill commenced with

challenges among the more ignoble of the competitors to display their steadiness and dexterity in idle competition. None but the common men engaged in this strife, which had little to interest the spectators, among whom no officer had yet appeared.

Most of the soldiers were Scotch, the regiment having been raised at Stirling and its vicinity not many years before, though, as in the case of Sergeant Dunham, many Americans had joined it since its arrival in the colonies. As a matter of course, the provincials were generally the most expert marksmen; and after a desultory trial of half an hour it was necessarily conceded that a youth who had been born in the colony of New York, and who coming of Dutch extraction, was the most expert of all who had yet tried their skill. It was just as this opinion prevailed that the oldest captain, accompanied by most of the gentlemen and ladies of the fort, appeared on the parade. A train of some twenty females of humbler condition followed, among whom was seen the well-turned form, intelligent, blooming, animated countenance, and neat, becoming attire of Mabel Dunham.

Of females who were officially recognized as belonging to the class of ladies, there were but three in the fort, all of whom were officers' wives; Mabel being strictly, as had been stated by the Quartermaster, the only real candidate for matrimony among her sex.

Some little preparation had been made for the proper reception of the females, who were placed on a low staging of planks near the immediate bank of the lake. In this vicinity the prizes were suspended from a post. Great care was taken to reserve the front seat of the stage for the three ladies and their children; while Mabel and those who belonged to the non-commissioned officers of the regiment, occupied the second. The wives and daughters of the privates were huddled together in the rear, some standing and some sitting, as they could find room. Mabel, who had already been admitted to the society of the officers' wives, on the footing of a humble companion, was a good deal noticed by the ladies in front, who had a proper appreciation of modest self-respect and gentle refinement, though they were all fully aware of the value of rank, more particularly in a garrison.

As soon as this important portion of the spectators had got into their places, Lundie gave orders for the trial of skill to proceed in the manner that had been prescribed in his previous orders. Some eight or ten of the best marksmen of the garrison now took possession of the stand, and began to fire in succession. Among them were officers and men indiscriminately placed, nor were the casual visitors in the fort excluded from the competition.

As might have been expected of men whose amusements and comfortable subsistence equally depended on skill in the use of their weapons, it was soon found that they were all sufficiently expert to hit the bull's -eye, or the white spot in the centre of the target. Others who succeeded them, it is true, were less sure, their bullets striking in the different circles that surrounded the centre of the target without touching it.

According to the rules of the day, none could proceed to the second trial who had failed in the first, and the adjutant of the place, who acted as master of the ceremonies, or marshal of the day, called upon the successful adventurers by name to get ready for the next effort, while he gave notice that those who failed to present themselves for the shot at the bull's -eye would necessarily be excluded from all the higher trials. Just at this moment Lundie, the Quartermaster, and Jasper Eau-douce appeared in the group at the stand, while the Pathfinder walked leisurely on the ground without his beloved rifle, for him a measure so unusual, as to be understood by all present as a proof that he did not consider himself a competitor for the honors of the day. All made way for Major Duncan, who, as he approached the stand in a good-humored way, took his station, levelled his rifle carelessly, and fired. The bullet missed the required mark by several inches.

"Major Duncan is excluded from the other trials!" proclaimed the Adjutant, in a voice so strong and confident that all the elder officers and the sergeants well understood that this failure was preconcerted, while all the younger gentlemen and the privates felt new encouragement to proceed on account of the evident impartiality with which the laws of the sports were administered.

"Now, Master Eau-douce, comes your turn," said Muir; "and if you do not beat the Major, I shall say that your hand is better skilled with the oar than with the rifle."

Jasper's handsome face flushed, he stepped upon the stand, cast a hasty glance at Mabel, whose pretty form he ascertained was bending eagerly forward as if to note the result, dropped the barrel of his rifle with but little apparent care into the palm of his left hand, raised the muzzle for a single instant with exceeding steadiness, and fired. The bullet passed directly through the centre of the bull's -eye, much the best shot of the morning, since the others had merely touched the

paint.

"Well performed, Master Jasper," said Muir, as soon as the result was declared; "and a shot that might have done credit to an older head and a more experienced eye. I'm thinking, notwithstanding, there was some of a youngster's luck in it; for ye were no' partic'lar in the aim ye took. Ye may be quick, Eau-douce, in the movement, but yer not philosophic nor scientific in yer management of the weepoon. Now, Sergeant Dunham, I'll thank you to request the ladies to give a closer attention than common; for I'm about to make that use of the rifle which may be called the intellectual. Jasper would have killed, I allow; but then there would not have been half the satisfaction in receiving such a shot as in receiving one that is discharged scientifically."

All this time the Quartermaster was preparing himself for the scientific trial; but he delayed his aim until he saw that the eye of Mabel, in common with those of her companions, was fastened on him in curiosity. As the others left him room, out of respect to his rank, no one stood near the competitor but his commanding officer, to whom he now said in his familiar manner —

"Ye see, Lundie, that something is to be gained by exciting a female's curiosity. It's an active sentiment is curiosity, and properly improved may lead to gentler innovations in the end."

"Very true, Davy; but ye keep us all waiting while ye make your preparations; and here is Pathfinder drawing near to catch a lesson from your greater experience."

"Well Pathfinder, and so *you* have come to get an idea too, concerning the philosophy of shooting? I do not wish to hide my light under a bushel, and yer welcome to all ye'll learn. Do ye no' mean to try a shot yersel', man?"

"Why should I, Quartermaster, why should I? I want none of the prizes; and as for honor, I have had enough of that, if it's any honor to shoot better than yourself. I'm not a woman to wear a calash."

"Very true; but ye might find a woman that is precious in your eyes to wear it for ye, as —"

"Come, Davy," interrupted the Major, "your shot or a retreat. The Adjutant is getting impatient."

"The Quartermaster's department and the Adjutant's department are seldom compliable, Lundie; but I'm ready. Stand a little aside, Pathfinder, and give the ladies an opportunity."

Lieutenant Muir now took his attitude with a good deal of studied elegance, raised his rifle slowly, lowered it, raised it again, repeated the manoeuvres, and fired.

"Missed the target altogether!" shouted the man whose duty it was to mark the bullets, and who had little relish for the Quartermaster's tedious science. "Missed the target!"

"It cannot be!" cried Muir, his face flushing equally with indignation and shame; "it cannot be, Adjutant; for I never did so awkward a thing in my life. I appeal to the ladies for a juster judgment."

"The ladies shut their eyes when you fired!" exclaimed the regimental wags. "Your preparations alarmed them."

"I will na believe such calumny of the leddies, nor sic' a reproach on my own skill," returned the Quartermaster, growing more and more Scotch as he warmed with his feelings; "it's a conspiracy to rob a meritorious man of his dues."

"It's a dead miss, Muir," said the laughing Lundie; "and ye'll jist sit down quietly with the disgrace."

"No, no, Major," Pathfinder at length observed; "the Quartermaster *is* a good shot for a slow one and a measured distance, though nothing extr'ordinary for real service. He has covered Jasper's bullet, as will be seen, if any one will take the trouble to examine the target."

The respect for Pathfinder's skill and for his quickness and accuracy of sight was so profound and general, that, the instant he made this declaration, the spectators began to distrust their own opinions, and a dozen rushed to the target in order to ascertain the fact. There, sure enough, it was found that the Quartermaster's bullet had gone through the hole made by Jasper's, and that, too, so accurately as to require a minute examination to be certain of the circumstance; which, however, was soon clearly established, by discovering one bullet over the other in the stump against which the target was placed.

"I told ye, ladies, ye were about to witness the influence of science on gunnery," said the Quartermaster, advancing towards the staging occupied by the females. "Major Duncan derides the idea of mathematics entering into target-shooting; but I tell him philosophy colors, and enlarges, and improves, and dilates, and explains everything that belongs to human life, whether it be a shooting-match or a sermon. In a word, philosophy is philosophy, and that is saying all that the

subject requires.”

“I trust you exclude love from the catalogue,” observed the wife of a captain who knew the history of the Quartermaster’s marriages, and who had a woman’s malice against the monopolizer of her sex; “it seems that philosophy has little in common with love.”

“You wouldn’t say that, madam, if your heart had experienced many trials. It’s the man or the woman that has had many occasions to improve the affections that can best speak of such matters; and, believe me, of all love, philosophical is the most lasting, as it is the most rational.”

“You would then recommend experience as an improvement on the passion?”

“Your quick mind has conceived the idea at a glance. The happiest marriages are those in which youth and beauty and confidence on one side, rely on the sagacity, moderation, and prudence of years — middle age, I mean, madam, for I’ll no’ deny that there is such a thing as a husband’s being too old for a wife. Here is Sergeant Dunham’s charming daughter, now, to approve of such sentiments, I’m certain; her character for discretion being already well established in the garrison, short as has been her residence among us.”

“Sergeant Dunham’s daughter is scarcely a fitting interlocutor in a discourse between you and me, Lieutenant Muir,” rejoined the captain’s lady, with careful respect for her own dignity; “and yonder is the Pathfinder about to take his chance, by way of changing the subject.”

“I protest, Major Duncan, I protest,” cried Muir hurrying back towards the stand, with both arms elevated by way of enforcing his words — “I protest in the strongest terms, gentlemen, against Pathfinder’s being admitted into these sports with Killdeer, which is a piece, to say nothing of long habit that is altogether out of proportion for a trial of skill against Government rifles.”

“Killdeer is taking its rest, Quartermaster,” returned Pathfinder calmly, “and no one here thinks of disturbing it. I did not think, myself, of pulling a trigger to-day; but Sergeant Dunham has been persuading me that I shall not do proper honor to his handsome daughter, who came in under my care, if I am backward on such an occasion. I’m using Jasper’s rifle, Quartermaster, as you may see, and that is no better than your own.”

Lieutenant Muir was now obliged to acquiesce, and every eye turned towards the Pathfinder, as he took the required station. The air and attitude of this celebrated guide and hunter were extremely fine, as he raised his tall form and levelled the piece, showing perfect self-command, and a thorough knowledge of the power of the human frame as well as of the weapon. Pathfinder was not what is usually termed a handsome man, though his appearance excited so much confidence and commanded respect. Tall, and even muscular, his frame might have been esteemed nearly perfect, were it not for the total absence of everything like flesh. Whiplash was scarcely more rigid than his arms and legs, or, at need, more pliable; but the outlines of his person were rather too angular for the proportion that the eye most approves. Still, his motions, being natural, were graceful, and, being calm and regulated, they gave him an air and dignity that associated well with the idea, which was so prevalent, of his services and peculiar merits. His honest, open features were burnt to a bright red, that comported well with the notion of exposure and hardships, while his sinewy hands denoted force, and a species of use removed from the stiffening and deforming effects of labor. Although no one perceived any of those gentler or more insinuating qualities which are apt to win upon a woman’s affections, as he raised his rifle not a female eye was fastened on him without a silent approbation of the freedom of his movements and the manliness of his air. Thought was scarcely quicker than his aim; and, as the smoke floated above his head, the butt-end of the rifle was seen on the ground, the hand of the Pathfinder was leaning on the barrel, and his honest countenance was illuminated by his usual silent, hearty laugh.

“If one dared to hint at such a thing,” cried Major Duncan, “I should say that the Pathfinder had also missed the target.”

“No, no, Major,” returned the guide confidently; “that *would* be a risky declaration. I didn’t load the piece, and can’t say what was in it; but if it was lead, you will find the bullet driving down those of the Quartermaster and Jasper, else is not my name Pathfinder.”

A shout from the target announced the truth of this assertion.

“That’s not all, that’s not all, boys,” called out the guide, who was now slowly advancing towards the stage occupied by the females; “if you find the target touched at all, I’ll own to a miss. The Quartermaster cut the wood, but you’ll find no wood cut by that last messenger.”

"Very true, Pathfinder, very true," answered Muir, who was lingering near Mabel, though ashamed to address her particularly in the presence of the officers' wives. "The Quartermaster did cut the wood, and by that means he opened a passage for your bullet, which went through the hole he had made."

"Well, Quartermaster, there goes the nail and we'll see who can drive it closer, you or I; for, though I did not think of showing what a rifle can do to-day, now my hand is in, I'll turn my back to no man that carries King George's commission. Chingachgook is outlying, or he might force me into some of the niceties of the art; but, as for you, Quartermaster, if the nail don't stop you, the potato will."

"You're over boastful this morning, Pathfinder; but you'll find you've no green boy fresh from the settlements and the towns to deal with, I will assure ye!"

"I know that well, Quartermaster; I know that well, and shall not deny your experience. You've lived many years on the frontiers, and I've heard of you in the colonies, and among the Indians, too, quite a human life ago."

"Na, na," interrupted Muir in his broadest Scotch, "this is injustice, man. I've no' lived so very long, neither."

"I'll do you justice, Lieutenant, even if you get the best in the potato trial. I say you've passed a good human life, for a soldier, in places where the rifle is daily used, and I know you are a creditable and ingenious marksman; but then you are not a true rifle-shooter. As for boasting, I hope I'm not a vain talker about my own exploits; but a man's gifts are his gifts, and it's flying in the face of Providence to deny them. The Sergeant's daughter, here, shall judge between us, if you have the stomach to submit to so pretty a judge."

The Pathfinder had named Mabel as the arbiter because he admired her, and because, in his eyes, rank had little or no value; but Lieutenant Muir shrank at such a reference in the presence of the wives of the officers. He would gladly keep himself constantly before the eyes and the imagination of the object of his wishes; but he was still too much under the influence of old prejudices, and perhaps too wary, to appear openly as her suitor, unless he saw something very like a certainty of success. On the discretion of Major Duncan he had a full reliance, and he apprehended no betrayal from that quarter; but he was quite aware, should it ever get abroad that he had been refused by the child of a non-commissioned officer, he would find great difficulty in making his approaches to any other woman of a condition to which he might reasonably aspire. Notwithstanding these doubts and misgivings, Mabel looked so prettily, blushed so charmingly, smiled so sweetly, and altogether presented so winning a picture of youth, spirit, modesty, and beauty, that he found it exceedingly tempting to be kept so prominently before her imagination, and to be able to address her freely.

"You shall have it your own way, Pathfinder," he answered, as soon as his doubts had settled down into determination; "let the Sergeant's daughter — his charming daughter, I should have termed her — be the umpire then; and to her we will both dedicate the prize, that one or the other must certainly win. Pathfinder must be humored, ladies, as you perceive, else, no doubt, we should have had the honor to submit ourselves to one of your charming society."

A call for the competitors now drew the Quartermaster and his adversary away, and in a few moments the second trial of skill commenced. A common wrought nail was driven lightly into the target, its head having been first touched with paint, and the marksman was required to hit it, or he lost his chances in the succeeding trials. No one was permitted to enter, on this occasion, who had already failed in the essay against the bull's-eye.

There might have been half a dozen aspirants for the honors of this trial; one or two, who had barely succeeded in touching the spot of paint in the previous strife, preferring to rest their reputations there, feeling certain that they could not succeed in the greater effort that was now exacted of them. The first three adventurers failed, all coming very near the mark, but neither touching it. The fourth person who presented himself was the Quartermaster, who, after going through his usual attitudes, so far succeeded as to carry away a small portion of the head of the nail, planting his bullet by the side of its point. This was not considered an extraordinary shot, though it brought the adventurer within the category.

"You've saved your bacon, Quartermaster, as they say in the settlements of their creaturs," cried Pathfinder, laughing; "but it would take a long time to build a house with a hammer no better than yours. Jasper, here, will show you how a nail is to be started, or the lad has lost some of his steadiness of hand and sartainty of eye. You would have done better yourself, Lieutenant, had you not been so much bent on soldierizing your figure. Shooting is a natural gift, and is to be exercised in a natural way."

"We shall see, Pathfinder; I call that a pretty attempt at a nail; and I doubt if the 55th has another hammer, as you call it, that can do just the same thing over again."

"Jasper is not in the 55th, but there goes his rap."

As the Pathfinder spoke, the bullet of Eau-douce hit the nail square, and drove it into the target, within an inch of the head.

"Be all ready to clench it, boys!" cried out Pathfinder, stepping into his friend's tracks the instant they were vacant. "Never mind a new nail; I can see that, though the paint is gone, and what I can see I can hit, at a hundred yards, though it were only a mosquito's eye. Be ready to clench!"

The rifle cracked, the bullet sped its way, and the head of the nail was buried in the wood, covered by the piece of flattened lead.

"Well, Jasper, lad," continued Pathfinder, dropping the butt-end of his rifle to the ground, and resuming the discourse, as if he thought nothing of his own exploit, "you improve daily. A few more tramps on land in my company, and the best marksman on the frontiers will have occasion to look keenly when he takes his stand ag'in you. The Quartermaster is respectable, but he will never get any farther; whereas you, Jasper, have the gift, and may one day defy any who pull trigger."

"Hoot, hoot!" exclaimed Muir; "do you call hitting the head of the nail respectable only, when it's the perfection of the art? Any one the least refined and elevated in sentiment knows that the delicate touches denote the master; whereas your sledge-hammer blows come from the rude and uninstructed. If 'a miss is as good as a mile,' a hit ought to be better, Pathfinder, whether it wound or kill."

"The surest way of settling this rivalry will be to make another trial," observed Lundie, "and that will be of the potato. You're Scotch, Mr. Muir, and might fare better were it a cake or a thistle; but frontier law has declared for the American fruit, and the potato it shall be."

As Major Duncan manifested some impatience of manner, Muir had too much tact to delay the sports any longer with his discursive remarks, but judiciously prepared himself for the next appeal. To say the truth, the Quartermaster had little or no faith in his own success in the trial of skill that was to follow, nor would he have been so free in presenting himself as a competitor at all had he anticipated it would have been made; but Major Duncan, who was somewhat of a humorist in his own quiet Scotch way, had secretly ordered it to be introduced expressly to mortify him; for, a laird himself, Lundie did not relish the notion that one who might claim to be a gentleman should bring discredit on his caste by forming an unequal alliance. As soon as everything was prepared, Muir was summoned to the stand, and the potato was held in readiness to be thrown. As the sort of feat we are about to offer to the reader, however, may be new to him, a word in explanation will render the matter more clear. A potato of large size was selected, and given to one who stood at the distance of twenty yards from the stand. At the word "heave!" which was given by the marksman, the vegetable was thrown with a gentle toss into the air, and it was the business of the adventurer to cause a ball to pass through it before it reached the ground.

The Quartermaster, in a hundred experiments, had once succeeded in accomplishing this difficult feat; but he now essayed to perform it again, with a sort of blind hope that was fated to be disappointed. The potato was thrown in the usual manner, the rifle was discharged, but the flying target was untouched.

"To the right-about, and fall out, Quartermaster," said Lundie, smiling at the success of the artifice. "The honor of the silken calash will lie between Jasper Eau-douce and Pathfinder."

"And how is the trial to end, Major?" inquired the latter. "Are we to have the two-potato trial, or is it to be settled by centre and skin?"

"By centre and skin, if there is any perceptible difference; otherwise the double shot must follow."

"This is an awful moment to me, Pathfinder," observed Jasper, as he moved towards the stand, his face actually losing its color in intensity of feeling.

Pathfinder gazed earnestly at the young man; and then, begging Major Duncan to have patience for a moment, he led his friend out of the hearing of all near him before he spoke.

"You seem to take this matter to heart, Jasper?" the hunter remarked, keeping his eyes fastened on those of the youth.

"I must own, Pathfinder, that my feelings were never before so much bound up in success."

"And do you so much crave to outdo me, an old and tried friend? — and that, as it might be, in my own way? Shooting is my gift, boy, and no common hand can equal mine."

"I know it — I know it, Pathfinder; but yet —"

"But what, Jasper, boy? — speak freely; you talk to a friend."

The young man compressed his lips, dashed a hand across his eye, and flushed and paled alternately, like a girl confessing her love. Then, squeezing the other's hand, he said calmly, like one whose manhood has overcome all other sensations, "I would lose an arm, Pathfinder, to be able to make an offering of that calash to Mabel Dunham."

The hunter dropped his eyes to the ground, and as he walked slowly back towards the stand, he seemed to ponder deeply on what he had just heard.

"You never could succeed in the double trial, Jasper!" he suddenly remarked.

"Of that I am certain, and it troubles me."

"What a creature is mortal man! He pines for things which are not of his gift and treats the bounties of Providence lightly. No matter, no matter. Take your station, Jasper, for the Major is waiting; and harken, lad — I must touch the skin, for I could not show my face in the garrison with less than that."

"I suppose I must submit to my fate," returned Jasper, flushing and losing his color as before; "but I will make the effort, if I die."

"What a thing is mortal man!" repeated Pathfinder, falling back to allow his friend room to take his arm; "he overlooks his own gifts, and craves those of another!"

The potato was thrown, Jasper fired, and the shout that followed preceded the announcement of the fact that he had driven his bullet through its centre, or so nearly so as to merit that award.

"Here is a competitor worthy of you, Pathfinder," cried Major Duncan with delight, as the former took his station; "and we may look to some fine shooting in the double trial."

"What a thing is mortal man!" repeated the hunter, scarcely seeming to notice what was passing around him, so much were his thoughts absorbed in his own reflections. "Toss!"

The potato was tossed, the rifle cracked — it was remarked just as the little black ball seemed stationary in the air, for the marksman evidently took unusual heed to his aim — and then a look of disappointment and wonder succeeded among those who caught the falling target.

"Two holes in one?" called out the Major.

"The skin, the skin!" was the answer; "only the skin!"

"How's this, Pathfinder? Is Jasper Eau-douce to carry off the honors of the day?"

"The calash is his," returned the other, shaking his head and walking quietly away from the stand. "What a creature is mortal man! never satisfied with his own gifts, but for ever craving that which Providence denies!"

As Pathfinder had not buried his bullet in the potato, but had cut through the skin, the prize was immediately adjudged to Jasper. The calash was in the hands of the latter when the Quartermaster approached, and with a polite air of cordiality he wished his successful rival joy of his victory.

"But now you've got the calash, lad, it's of no use to you," he added; "it will never make a sail, nor even an ensign. I'm thinking, Eau-douce, you'd no' be sorry to see its value in good siller of the king?"

"Money cannot buy it, Lieutenant," returned Jasper, whose eye lighted with all the fire of success and joy. "I would rather have won this calash than have obtained fifty new suits of sails for the *Scud!*"

"Hoot, hoot, lad! you are going mad like all the rest of them. I'd even venture to offer half a guinea for the trifle rather than it should lie kicking about in the cabin of your cutter, and in the end become an ornament for the head of a squaw."

Although Jasper did not know that the wary Quartermaster had not offered half the actual cost of the prize, he heard the proposition with indifference. Shaking his head in the negative, he advanced towards the stage, where his approach excited a little commotion, the officers' ladies, one and all, having determined to accept the present, should the gallantry of the young sailor induce him to offer it. But Jasper's diffidence, no less than admiration for another, would have prevented him from aspiring to the honor of complimenting any whom he thought so much his superiors.

"Mabel," said he, "this prize is for you, unless —"

"Unless what, Jasper?" answered the girl, losing her own bashfulness in the natural and generous wish to relieve his embarrassment, though both reddened in a way to betray strong feeling.

"Unless you may think too indifferently of it, because it is offered by one who may have no right to believe his gift will be accepted."

"I do accept it, Jasper; and it shall be a sign of the danger I have passed in your company, and of the gratitude I feel for your care of me — your care, and that of the Pathfinder."

"Never mind me, never mind me!" exclaimed the latter; "this is Jasper's luck, and Jasper's gift: give him full credit for both. My turn may come another day; mine and the Quartermaster's, who seems to grudge the boy the calash; though what *he* can want of it I cannot understand, for he has no wife."

"And has Jasper Eau-douce a wife? Or have you a wife yoursel', Pathfinder? I may want it to help to get a wife, or as a memorial that I have had a wife, or as proof how much I admire the sex, or because it is a female garment, or for some other equally respectable motive. It's not the unreflecting that are the most prized by the thoughtful, and there is no surer sign that a man made a good husband to his first consort, let me tell you all, than to see him speedily looking round for a competent successor. The affections are good gifts from Providence, and they that have loved one faithfully prove how much of this bounty has been lavished upon them by loving another as soon as possible."

"It may be so, it may be so. I am no practitioner in such things, and cannot gainsay it. But Mabel here, the Sergeant's daughter, will give you full credit for the words. Come, Jasper, although our hands are out, let us see what the other lads can do with the rifle."

Pathfinder and his companions retired, for the sports were about to proceed. The ladies, however, were not so much engrossed with rifle-shooting as to neglect the calash. It passed from hand to hand; the silk was felt, the fashion criticized, and the work examined, and divers opinions were privately ventured concerning the fitness of so handsome a thing passing into the possession of a non-commissioned officer's child.

"Perhaps you will be disposed to sell that calash, Mabel, when it has been a short time in your possession?" inquired the captain's lady. "Wear it, I should think, you never can."

"I may not wear it, madam," returned our heroine modestly; "but I should not like to part with it either."

"I daresay Sergeant Dunham keeps you above the necessity of selling your clothes, child; but, at the same time, it is money thrown away to keep an article of dress you can never wear."

"I should be unwilling to part with the gift of a friend."

"But the young man himself will think all the better of you for your prudence after the triumph of the day is forgotten. It is a pretty and a becoming calash, and ought not to be thrown away."

"I've no intention to throw it away, ma'am; and, if you please, would rather keep it."

"As you will, child; girls of your age often overlook the real advantages. Remember, however, if you do determine to dispose of the thing, that it is bespoke, and that I will not take it if you ever even put it on your own head."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mabel, in the meekest voice imaginable, though her eyes looked like diamonds, and her cheeks reddened to the tints of two roses, as she placed the forbidden garment over her well-turned shoulders, where she kept it a minute, as if to try its fitness, and then quietly removed it again.

The remainder of the sports offered nothing of interest. The shooting was reasonably good; but the trials were all of a scale lower than those related, and the competitors were soon left to themselves. The ladies and most of the officers withdrew, and the remainder of the females soon followed their example. Mabel was returning along the low flat rocks that line the shore of the lake, dangling her pretty calash from a prettier finger, when Pathfinder met her. He carried the rifle which he had used that day; but his manner had less of the frank ease of the hunter about it than usual, while his eye seemed roving and uneasy. After a few unmeaning words concerning the noble sheet of water before them, he turned towards his companion with strong interest in his countenance, and said —

"Jasper earned that calash for you, Mabel, without much trial of his gifts."

"It was fairly done, Pathfinder."

"No doubt, no doubt. The bullet passed neatly through the potato, and no man could have done more; though others might have done as much."

"But no one did as much!" exclaimed Mabel, with an animation that she instantly regretted; for she saw by the pained look of the guide that he was mortified equally by the remark and by the feeling with which it was uttered.



"It is true, it is true, Mabel, no one did as much then; but — yet there is no reason I should deny my gifts which come from Providence — yes, yes; no one did as much there, but you shall know what *can* be done here. Do you observe the gulls that are flying over our heads?"

"Certainly, Pathfinder; there are too many to escape notice."

"Here, where they cross each other in sailing about," he added, cocking and raising his rifle; "the two — the two. Now look!"

The piece was presented quick as thought, as two of the birds came in a line, though distant from each other many yards; the report followed, and the bullet passed through the bodies of both victims. No sooner had the gulls fallen into the lake, than Pathfinder dropped the butt-end of the rifle, and laughed in his own peculiar manner, every shade of dissatisfaction and mortified pride having left his honest face.

"That is something, Mabel, that is something; although I have no calash to give you! But ask Jasper himself; I'll leave it all to Jasper, for a truer tongue and heart are not in America."

"Then it was not Jasper's fault that he gained the prize?"

"Not it. He did his best, and he did well. For one that has water gifts, rather than land gifts, Jasper is uncommonly expert, and a better backer no one need wish, ashore or afloat. But it was my fault, Mabel, that he got the calash; though it makes no difference — it makes no difference, for the thing has gone to the right person."

"I believe I understand you, Pathfinder," said Mabel, blushing in spite of herself, "and I look upon the calash as the joint gift of yourself and Jasper."

"That would not be doing justice to the lad, neither. He won the garment, and had a right to give it away. The most you may think, Mabel, is to believe that, had I won it, it would have gone to the same person."

"I will remember that, Pathfinder, and take care that others know your skill, as it has been proved upon the poor gulls in my presence."

"Lord bless you, Mabel! there is no more need of your talking in favor of my shooting on this frontier, than of your talking about the water in the lake or the sun in the heavens. Everybody knows what I can do in that way, and your words would be thrown away, as much as French would be thrown away on an American bear."

"Then you think that Jasper knew you were giving him this advantage, of which he had so unhandsomely availed himself?" said Mabel, the color which had imparted so much lustre to her eyes gradually leaving her face, which became grave and thoughtful.

"I do not say that, but very far from it. We all forget things that we have known, when eager after our wishes. Jasper is satisfied that I can pass one bullet through two potatoes, as I sent my bullet through the gulls; and he knows no other man on the frontier can do the same thing. But with the calash before his eyes, and the hope of giving it to you, the lad was inclined to think better of himself, just at that moment, perhaps, than he ought. No, no, there's nothing mean or distrustful about Jasper Eau-douce, though it is a gift natural to all young men to wish to appear well in the eyes of handsome young women."

"I'll try to forget all, but the kindness you've both shown to a poor motherless girl," said Mabel, struggling to keep down emotions she scarcely knew how to account for herself. "Believe me, Pathfinder, I can never forget all you have already done for me — you and Jasper; and this new proof of your regard is not thrown away. Here, here is a brooch that is of silver, and I offer it as a token that I owe you life or liberty."

"What shall I do with this, Mabel?" asked the bewildered hunter, holding the simple trinket in his hand. "I have neither buckle nor button about me, for I wear nothing but leathern strings, and them of good deer-skins. It's pretty to the eye, but it is prettier far on the spot it came from than it can be about me."

"Nay, put it in your hunting-shirt; it will become it well. Remember, Pathfinder, that it is a token of friendship between us, and a sign that I can never forget you or your services."

Mabel then smiled an adieu; and, bounding up the bank, she was soon lost to view behind the mound of the fort.



## CHAPTER 12.

*Lo! dusky masses steal in dubious sight,  
Along the leaguer'd wall, and bristling bank,  
Of the arm'd river; while with straggling light,  
The stars peep through the vapor, dim and dank.*

—BYRON.

A few hours later Mabel Dunham was on the bastion that overlooked the river and the lake, seemingly in deep thought. The evening was calm and soft, and the question had arisen whether the party for the Thousand Islands would be able to get out that night or not, on account of the total absence of wind. The stores, arms, and ammunition were already shipped, and even Mabel's effects were on board; but the small draft of men that was to go was still ashore, there being no apparent prospect of the cutter's getting under way. Jasper had warped the *Scud* out of the cove, and so far up the stream as to enable him to pass through the outlet of the river whenever he chose; but there he still lay, riding at single anchor. The drafted men were lounging about the shore of the cove, undecided whether or not to pull off.

The sports of the morning had left a quiet in the garrison which was in harmony with the whole of the beautiful scene, and Mabel felt its influence on her feelings, though probably too little accustomed to speculate on such sensations to be aware of the cause. Everything near appeared lovely and soothing, while the solemn grandeur of the silent forest and placid expanse of the lake lent a sublimity that other scenes might have wanted. For the first time, Mabel felt the hold that the towns and civilization had gained on her habits sensibly weakened; and the warm-hearted girl began to think that a life passed amid objects such as those around her might be happy. How far the experience of the last days came in aid of the calm and holy eventide, and contributed towards producing that young conviction, may be suspected, rather than affirmed, in this early portion of our legend.

"A charming sunset, Mabel!" said the hearty voice of her uncle, so close to the ear of our heroine as to cause her to start — "a charming sunset, girl, for a fresh-water concern, though we should think but little of it at sea."

"And is not nature the same on shore or at sea — on a lake like this or on the ocean? Does not the sun shine on all alike, dear uncle; and can we not feel gratitude for the blessings of Providence as strongly on this remote frontier as in our own Manhattan?"

"The girl has fallen in with some of her mother's books. Is not nature the same, indeed! Now, Mabel, do you imagine that the nature of a soldier is the same as that of a seafaring man? You've relations in both callings, and ought to be able to answer."

"But uncle, I mean human nature."

"So do I, girl; the human nature of a seaman, and the human nature of one of these fellows of the 55th, not even excepting your own father. Here have they had a shooting-match — target-firing I should call it — this day, and what a different thing has it been from a target-firing afloat! There we should have sprung our broadside, sported with round shot, at an object half a mile off, at the very nearest; and the potatoes, if there happened to be any on board, as very likely would not have been the case, would have been left in the cook's coppers. It may be an honorable calling, that of a soldier, Mabel; but an experienced hand sees many follies and weaknesses in one of these forts. As for that bit of a lake, you know my opinion of it already, and I wish to disparage nothing. No real seafarer disparages anything; but, d — me, if I regard this here Ontario, as they call it, as more than so much water in a ship's scuttle-butt. Now, look you here, Mabel, if you wish to understand the difference between the ocean and a lake, I can make you comprehend it with a single look: this is what one may call a calm, seeing that there is no wind; though, to own the truth, I do not think the calms are as calm as them we get outside —"

"Uncle, there is not a breath of air. I do not think it possible for the leaves to be more immovably still than those of the entire forest are at this very moment."

"Leaves! what are leaves, child? there are no leaves at sea. If you wish to know whether it is a dead calm or not, try a mould candle — your dips flaring too much — and then you may be certain whether there is or is not any wind. If you were in a latitude where the air was so still that you found a difficulty in stirring it to draw it in in breathing, you might fancy it a calm. People are often on a short allowance of air in the calm latitudes. Here, again, look at that water! It is like milk in a

pan, with no more motion now than there is in a full hogshead before the bung is started. On the ocean the water is never still, let the air be as quiet as it may."

"The water of the ocean never still, Uncle Cap? not even in a calm?"

"Bless your heart, no, child! The ocean breathes like a living being, and its bosom is always heaving, as the poetizers call it, though there be no more air than is to be found in a siphon. No man ever saw the ocean still like this lake; but it heaves and sets as if it had lungs."

"And this lake is not absolutely still, for you perceive there is a little ripple on the shore, and you may even hear the surf plunging at moments against the rocks."

"All d — d poetry! Lake Ontario is no more the Atlantic than a Powles Hook periagila is a first-rate. That Jasper, notwithstanding, is a fine lad, and wants instruction only to make a man of him."

"Do you think him ignorant, uncle?" answered Mabel, prettily adjusting her hair, in order to do which she was obliged, or fancied she was obliged, to turn away her face. "To me Jasper Eau-douce appears to know more than most of the young men of his class. He has read but little, for books are not plenty in this part of the world; but he has thought much, at least so it seems to me, for one so young."

"He is ignorant, as all must be who navigate an inland water like this. No, no, Mabel; we both owe something to Jasper and the Pathfinder, and I have been thinking how I can best serve them, for I hold ingratitude to be the vice of a hog; for treat the animal to your own dinner, and he would eat you for the dessert."

"Very true, dear uncle; we ought indeed to do all we can to express our proper sense of the services of both these brave men."

"Spoken like your mother's daughter, girl, and in a way to do credit to the Cap family. Now, I've hit upon a traverse that will just suit all parties; and, as soon as we get back from this little expedition down the lake among them there Thousand Islands, and I am ready to return, it is my intention to propose it."

"Dearest uncle! this is so considerate in you, and will be so just! May I ask what your intentions are?"

"I see no reason for keeping them a secret from you, Mabel, though nothing need be said to your father about them; for the Sergeant has his prejudices, and might throw difficulties in the way. Neither Jasper nor his friend Pathfinder can ever make anything hereabouts, and I propose to take both with me down to the coast, and get them fairly afloat. Jasper would find his sea-legs in a fortnight, and a twelvemonth's v'y'ge would make him a man. Although Pathfinder might take more time, or never get to be rated able, yet one could make something of him too, particularly as a look-out, for he has unusually good eyes."

"Uncle, do you think either would consent to this?" said Mabel smiling.

"Do I suppose them simpletons? What rational being would neglect his own advancement? Let Jasper alone to push his way, and the lad may yet die the master of some square-rigged craft."

"And would he be any the happier for it, dear uncle? How much better is it to be the master of a square-rigged craft than to be master of a round-rigged craft?"

"Pooh, pooh, Magnet! You are just fit to read lectures about ships before some hysterical society; you don't know what you are talking about; leave these things to me, and they'll be properly managed. Ah! Here is the Pathfinder himself, and I may just as well drop him a hint of my benevolent intentions as regards himself. Hope is a great encourager of our exertions."

Cap nodded his head, and then ceased to speak, while the hunter approached, not with his usual frank and easy manner, but in a way to show that he was slightly embarrassed, if not distrustful of his reception.

"Uncle and niece make a family party," said Pathfinder, when near the two, "and a stranger may not prove a welcome companion?"

"You are no stranger, Master Pathfinder," returned Cap, "and no one can be more welcome than yourself. We were talking of you but a moment ago, and when friends speak of an absent man, he can guess what they have said."

"I ask no secrets. Every man has his enemies, and I have mine, though I count neither you, Master Cap, nor pretty Mabel here among the number. As for the Mingos, I will say nothing, though they have no just cause to hate me."

"That I'll answer for, Pathfinder! for you strike my fancy as being well-disposed and upright. There is a method,

however, of getting away from the enmity of even these Mingos; and if you choose to take it, no one will more willingly point it out than myself, without a charge for my advice either."

"I wish no enemies, Saltwater," for so the Pathfinder had begun to call Cap, having, insensibly to himself, adopted the term, by translating the name given him by the Indians in and about the fort — "I wish no enemies. I'm as ready to bury the hatchet with the Mingos as with the French, though you know that it depends on One greater than either of us so to turn the heart as to leave a man without enemies."

"By lifting your anchor, and accompanying me down to the coast, friend Pathfinder, when we get back from this short cruise on which we are bound, you will find yourself beyond the sound of the war-whoop, and safe enough from any Indian bullet."

"And what should I do on the salt water? Hunt in your towns? Follow the trails of people going and coming from market, and ambush dogs and poultry? You are no friend to my happiness, Master Cap, if you would lead me out of the shades of the woods to put me in the sun of the clearings."

"I did not propose to leave you in the settlements, Pathfinder, but to carry you out to sea, where a man can only be said to breathe freely. Mabel will tell you that such was my intention, before a word was said on the subject."

"And what does Mabel think would come of such a change? She knows that a man has his gifts, and that it is as useless to pretend to others as to withstand them that come from Providence. I am a hunter, and a scout, or a guide, Saltwater, and it is not in me to fly so much in the face of Heaven as to try to become anything else. Am I right, Mabel, or are you so much a woman as to wish to see a natur' altered?"

"I would wish to see no change in you, Pathfinder," Mabel answered, with a cordial sincerity and frankness that went directly to the hunter's heart; "and much as my uncle admires the sea, and great as is all the good that he thinks may come of it, I could not wish to see the best and noblest hunter of the woods transformed into an admiral. Remain what you are, my brave friend, and you need fear nothing short of the anger of God."

"Do you hear this, Saltwater? do you hear what the Sergeant's daughter is saying, and she is much too upright, and fair-minded, and pretty, not to think what she says. So long as she is satisfied with me as I am, I shall not fly in the face of the gifts of Providence, by striving to become anything else. I may seem useless here in a garrison; but when we get down among the Thousand Islands, there may be an opportunity to prove that a sure rifle is sometimes a Godsend."

"You are then to be of our party?" said Mabel, smiling so frankly and so sweetly on the guide that he would have followed her to the end of the earth. "I shall be the only female, with the exception of one soldier's wife, and shall feel none the less secure, Pathfinder, because you will be among our protectors."

"The Sergeant would do that, Mabel, though you were not of his kin. No one will overlook you. I should think your uncle here would like an expedition of this sort, where we shall go with sails, and have a look at an inland sea?"

"Your inland sea is no great matter, Master Pathfinder, and I expect nothing from it. I confess, however, I should like to know the object of the cruise; for one does not wish to be idle, and my brother-in-law, the Sergeant, is as close-mouthed as a freemason. Do you know, Mabel, what all this means?"

"Not in the least, uncle. I dare not ask my father any questions about his duty, for he thinks it is not a woman's business; and all I can say is, that we are to sail as soon as the wind will permit, and that we are to be absent a month."

"Perhaps Master Pathfinder can give me a useful hint; for a v'y'ge without an object is never pleasant to an old sailor."

"There is no great secret, Saltwater, concerning our port and object, though it is forbidden to talk much about either in the garrison. I am no soldier, however, and can use my tongue as I please, though as little given as another to idle conversation, I hope; still, as we sail so soon, and you are both to be of the party, you may as well be told where you are to be carried. You know that there are such things as the Thousand Islands, I suppose, Master Cap?"

"Ay, what are so called hereaway, though I take it for granted that they are not real islands, such as we fall in with on the ocean; and that the thousand means some such matter as two or three."

"My eyes are good, and yet have I often been foiled in trying to count them very islands."

"Ay, ay, I've known people who couldn't count beyond a certain number. Your real land-birds never know their own roosts, even in a landfall at sea. How many times have I seen the beach, and houses, and churches, when the passengers have not been able to see anything but water! I have no idea that a man can get fairly out of sight of land on fresh water."

The thing appears to me to be irrational and impossible.”

“You don’t know the lakes, Master Cap, or you would not say that. Before we get to the Thousand Islands, you will have other notions of what nature has done in this wilderness.”

“I have my doubts whether you have such a thing as a real island in all this region.”

“We’ll show you hundreds of them; not exactly a thousand, perhaps, but so many that eye cannot see them all, nor tongue count them.”

“I’ll engage, when the truth comes to be known, they’ll turn out to be nothing but peninsulas, or promontories; or continents; though these are matters, I daresay, of which you know little or nothing. But, islands or no islands, what is the object of the cruise, Master Pathfinder?”

“There can be no harm in giving you some idea of what we are going to do. Being so old a sailor, Master Cap, you’ve heard, no doubt, of such a port as Frontenac?”

“Who hasn’t? I will not say I’ve ever been inside the harbor, but I’ve frequently been off the place.”

“Then you are about to go upon ground with which you are acquainted. These great lakes, you must know, make a chain, the water passing out of one into the other, until it reaches Erie, which is a sheet off here to the westward, as large as Ontario itself. Well, out of Erie the water comes, until it reaches a low mountain like, over the edge of which it passes.”

“I should like to know how the devil it can do that?”

“Why, easy enough, Master Cap,” returned Pathfinder, laughing, “seeing that it has only to fall down hill. Had I said the water went *up* the mountain, there would have been nature ag’in it; but we hold it no great matter for water to run down hill — that is, *fresh* water.”

“Ay, ay, but you speak of the water of a lake’s coming down the side of a mountain; it’s in the teeth of reason, if reason has any teeth.”

“Well, well, we will not dispute the point; but what I’ve seen I’ve seen. After getting into Ontario, all the water of *all* the lakes passes down into the sea by a river; and in the narrow part of the sheet, where it is neither river nor lake, lie the islands spoken of. Now Frontenac is a post of the Frenchers above these same islands; and, as they hold the garrison below, their stores and ammunition are sent up the river to Frontenac, to be forwarded along the shores of this and the other lakes, in order to enable the enemy to play his devilries among the savages, and to take Christian scalps.”

“And will our presence prevent these horrible acts?” demanded Mabel, with interest.

“It may or it may not, as Providence wills. Lundie, as they call him, he who commands this garrison, sent a party down to take a station among the islands, to cut off some of the French boats; and this expedition of ours will be the second relief. As yet they’ve not done much, though two bateaux loaded with Indian goods have been taken; but a runner came in last week, and brought such tidings that the Major is about to make a last effort to circumvent the knaves. Jasper knows the way, and we shall be in good hands, for the Sergeant is prudent, and of the first quality at an ambushment; yes, he is both prudent and alert.”

“Is this all?” said Cap contemptuously; “by the preparations and equipments, I had thought there was a forced trade in the wind, and that an honest penny might be turned by taking an adventure. I suppose there are no shares in your fresh-water prize-money?”

“Anan?”

“I take it for granted the king gets all in these soldiering parties, and ambushments, as you call them.”

“I know nothing about that, Master Cap. I take my share of the lead and powder if any falls into our hands, and say nothing to the king about it. If any one fares better, it is not I; though it is time I did begin to think of a house and furniture and a home.”

Although the Pathfinder did not dare to look at Mabel while he made this direct allusion to his change of life, he would have given the world to know whether she was listening, and what was the expression of her countenance. Mabel little suspected the nature of the allusion, however; and her countenance was perfectly unembarrassed as she turned her eyes towards the river, where the appearance of some movement on board the *Scud* began to be visible.

“Jasper is bringing the cutter out,” observed the guide, whose look was drawn in the same direction by the fall of some heavy article on the deck. “The lad sees the signs of wind, no doubt, and wishes to be ready for it.”

"Ay, now we shall have an opportunity of learning seamanship," returned Cap, with a sneer. "There is a nicety in getting a craft under her canvas that shows the thoroughbred mariner as much as anything else. It's like a soldier buttoning his coat, and one can see whether he begins at the top or the bottom."

"I will not say that Jasper is equal to your seafarers below," observed Pathfinder, across whose upright mind an unworthy feeling of envy or of jealousy never passed; "but he is a bold boy, and manages his cutter as skillfully as any man can desire, on this lake at least. You didn't find him backwards at the Oswego Falls, Master Cap, where fresh water contrives to tumble down hill with little difficulty."

Cap made no other answer than a dissatisfied ejaculation, and then a general silence followed, all on the bastion studying the movements of the cutter with the interest that was natural to their own future connection with the vessel. It was still a dead calm, the surface of the lake literally glittering with the last rays of the sun. The *Scud* had been warped up to a kedge that lay a hundred yards above the points of the outlet, where she had room to manoeuvre in the river which then formed the harbor of Oswego. But the total want of air prevented any such attempt, and it was soon evident that the light vessel was to be taken through the passage under her sweeps. Not a sail was loosened; but as soon as the kedge was tripped, the heavy fall of the sweeps was heard, when the cutter, with her head up stream, began to sheer towards the centre of the current; on reaching which, the efforts of the men ceased, and she drifted towards the outlet. In the narrow pass itself her movement was rapid, and in less than five minutes the *Scud* was floating outside of the two low gravelly points which intercepted the waves of the lake. No anchor was let go, but the vessel continued to set off from the land, until her dark hull was seen resting on the glossy surface of the lake, full a quarter of a mile beyond the low bluff which formed the eastern extremity of what might be called the outer harbor or roadstead. Here the influence of the river current ceased, and she became, virtually, stationary.

"She seems very beautiful to me, uncle," said Mabel, whose gaze had not been averted from the cutter for a single moment while it had thus been changing its position; "I daresay you can find faults in her appearance, and in the way she is managed; but to my ignorance both are perfect."

"Ay, ay; she drops down with a current well enough, girl, and so would a chip. But when you come to niceties, all old tar like myself has no need of spectacles to find fault."

"Well, Master Cap," put in the guide, who seldom heard anything to Jasper's prejudice without manifesting a disposition to interfere, "I've heard old and experienced saltwater mariners confess that the *Scud* is as pretty a craft as floats. I know nothing of such matters myself; but one may have his own notions about a ship, even though they be wrong notions; and it would take more than one witness to persuade me Jasper does not keep his boat in good order."

"I do not say that the cutter is downright lubberly, Master Pathfinder; but she has faults, and great faults."

"And what are they, uncle? If he knew them, Jasper would be glad to mend them."

"What are they? Why, fifty; ay, for that matter a hundred. Very material and manifest faults."

"Do name them, sir, and Pathfinder will mention them to his friend."

"Name them! it is no easy matter to call off the stars, for the simple reason that they are so numerous. Name them, indeed! Why, my pretty niece, Miss Magnet, what do you think of that main-boom now? To my ignorant eyes, it is topped at least a foot too high; and then the pennant is foul; and — and — ay, d — me, if there isn't a topsail gasket adrift; and it wouldn't surprise me at all if there should be a round turn in that hawser, if the kedge were to be let go this instant. Faults indeed! No seaman could look at her a moment without seeing that she is as full of faults as a servant who has asked for his discharge."

"This may be very true, uncle, though I much question if Jasper knows of them. I do not think he would suffer these things, Pathfinder, if they were once pointed out to him."

"Let Jasper manage his own cutter, Mabel. His gift lies that-a-way, and I'll answer for it, no one can teach him how to keep the *Scud* out of the hands of the Frontenackers or their devilish Mingo friends. Who cares for round turns in kedges, and for hawsers that are topped too high, Master Cap, so long as the craft sails well, and keeps clear of the Frenchers? I will trust Jasper against all the seafarers of the coast, up here on the lakes; but I do not say he has any gift for the ocean, for there he has never been tried."

Cap smiled condescendingly, but he did not think it necessary to push his criticisms any further just as that moment. By this time the cutter had begun to drift at the mercy of the currents of the lake, her head turning in all directions, though

slowly, and not in a way to attract particular attention. Just at this moment the jib was loosened and hoisted, and presently the canvas swelled towards the land, though no evidences of air were yet to be seen on the surface of the water. Slight, however, as was the impulsion, the light hull yielded; and in another minute the *Scud* was seen standing across the current of the river with a movement so easy and moderate as to be scarcely perceptible. When out of the stream, she struck an eddy and shot up towards the land, under the eminence where the fort stood, when Jasper dropped his kedge.

“Not lubberly done,” muttered Cap in a sort of soliloquy — “not over lubberly, though he should have put his helm a-starboard instead of a-port; for a vessel ought always to come-to with her head off shore, whether she is a league from the land or only a cable’s length, since it has a careful look, and looks are something in this world.”

“Jasper is a handy lad,” suddenly observed Sergeant Dunham at his brother-in-law’s elbow; “and we place great reliance on his skill in our expeditions. But come, one and all, we have but half an hour more of daylight to embark in, and the boats will be ready for us by the time we are ready for them.”

On this intimation the whole party separated, each to find those trifles which had not been shipped already. A few taps of the drum gave the necessary signal to the soldiers, and in a minute all were in motion.



## CHAPTER 13.

*The goblin now the fool alarms,  
Hags meet to mumble o'er their charms,  
The night-mare rides the dreaming ass,  
And fairies trip it on the grass.*

—COTTON.

The embarkation of so small a party was a matter of no great delay or embarrassment. The whole force confided to the care of Sergeant Dunham consisted of but ten privates and two non-commissioned officers, though it was soon positively known that Mr. Muir was to accompany the expedition. The Quartermaster, however, went as a volunteer, while some duty connected with his own department, as had been arranged between him and his commander, was the avowed object. To these must be added the Pathfinder and Cap, with Jasper and his subordinates, one of whom was a boy. The party, consequently, consisted of less than twenty men, and a lad of fourteen. Mabel and the wife of a common soldier were the only females.

Sergeant Dunham carried off his command in a large bateau, and then returned for his final orders, and to see that his brother-in-law and daughter were properly attended to. Having pointed out to Cap the boat that he and Mabel were to use, he ascended the hill to seek his last interview with Lundie.

It was nearly dark when Mabel found herself in the boat that was to carry her off to the cutter. So very smooth was the surface of the lake, that it was not found necessary to bring the bateaux into the river to receive their freights; but the beach outside being totally without surf, and the water as tranquil as that of a pond, everybody embarked there. When the boat left the land, Mabel would not have known that she was afloat on so broad a sheet of water by any movement which is usual to such circumstances. The oars had barely time to give a dozen strokes, when the boat lay at the cutter's side.

Jasper was in readiness to receive his passengers; and, as the deck of the *Scud* was but two or three feet above the water, no difficulty was experienced in getting on board of her. As soon as this was effected, the young man pointed out to Mabel and her companion the accommodations prepared for their reception. The little vessel contained four apartments below, all between decks having been expressly constructed with a view to the transportation of officers and men, with their wives and families. First in rank was what was called the after-cabin, a small apartment that contained four berths, and which enjoyed the advantage of possessing small windows, for the admission of air and light. This was uniformly devoted to females whenever any were on board; and as Mabel and her companion were alone, they had ample accommodation. The main cabin was larger, and lighted from above. It was now appropriated to the Quartermaster, the Sergeant, Cap, and Jasper; the Pathfinder roaming through any part of the cutter he pleased, the female apartment excepted. The corporals and common soldiers occupied the space beneath the main hatch, which had a deck for such a purpose, while the crew were berthed, as usual, in the forecabin. Although the cutter did not measure quite fifty tons, the draft of officers and men was so light, that there was ample room for all on board, there being space enough to accommodate treble the number, if necessary.

As soon as Mabel had taken possession of her own really comfortable cabin, in doing which she could not abstain from indulging in the pleasant reflection that some of Jasper's favor had been especially manifested in her behalf, she went on deck again. Here all was momentarily in motion; the men were roving to and fro, in quest of their knapsacks and other effects; but method and habit soon reduced things to order, when the stillness on board became even imposing, for it was connected with the idea of future adventure and ominous preparation.

Darkness was now beginning to render objects on shore indistinct, the whole of the land forming one shapeless black outline of even forest summits, to be distinguished from the impending heavens only by the greater light of the sky. The stars, however, soon began to appear in the latter, one after another, in their usual mild, placid lustre, bringing with them that sense of quiet which ordinarily accompanies night. There was something soothing, as well as exciting, in such a scene; and Mabel, who was seated on the quarter-deck, sensibly felt both influences. The Pathfinder was standing near her, leaning, as usual, on his long rifle, and she fancied that, through the growing darkness of the hour, she could trace even stronger lines of thought than usual in his rugged countenance.

"To you, Pathfinder, expeditions like this can be no great novelty," said she; "though I am surprised to find how silent



and thoughtful the men appear to be.”

“We learn this by making war ag’in Indians. Your militia are great talkers and little doers in general; but the soldier who has often met the Mingos learns to know the value of a prudent tongue. A silent army, in the woods, is doubly strong; and a noisy one, doubly weak. If tongues made soldiers, the women of a camp would generally carry the day.”

“But we are neither an army, nor in the woods. There can be no danger of Mingos in the *Scud*.”

“No one is safe from a Mingo, who does not understand his very natur’; and even then he must act up to his own knowledge, and that closely. Ask Jasper how he got command of this very cutter.”

“And how *did* he get command?” inquired Mabel, with an earnestness and interest that quite delighted her simple-minded and true-hearted companion, who was never better pleased than when he had an opportunity of saying aught in favor of a friend. “It is honorable to him that he has reached this station while yet so young.”

“That is it; but he deserved it all, and more. A frigate wouldn’t have been too much to pay for so much spirit and coolness, had there been such a thing on Ontario, as there is not, hows’ever, or likely to be.”

“But Jasper — you have not yet told me how he got the command of the schooner.”

“It is a long story, Mabel, and one your father, the Sergeant, can tell much better than I; for he was present, while I was off on a distant scouting. Jasper is not good at a story, I will own that; I have heard him questioned about this affair, and he never made a good tale of it, although every body knows it was a good thing. The *Scud* had near fallen into the hands of the French and the Mingos, when Jasper saved her, in a way which none but a quick-witted mind and a bold heart would have attempted. The Sergeant will tell the tale better than I can, and I wish you to question him some day, when nothing better offers.”

Mabel determined to ask her father to repeat the incidents of the affair that very night; for it struck her young fancy that nothing better could well offer than to listen to the praises of one who was a bad historian of his own exploits.

“Will the *Scud* remain with us when we reach the island?” she asked, after a little hesitation about the propriety of the question; “or shall we be left to ourselves?”

“That’s as may be: Jasper does not often keep the cutter idle when anything is to be done; and we may expect activity on his part. My gifts, however, run so little towards the water and vessels generally, unless it be among rapids and falls and in canoes, that I pretend to know nothing about it. We shall have all right under Jasper, I make no doubt, who can find a trail on Ontario as well as a Delaware can find one on the land.”

“And our own Delaware, Pathfinder — the Big Serpent — why is he not with us to-night?”

“Your question would have been more natural had you said, Why are *you* here, Pathfinder? The Serpent is in his place, while I am not in mine. He is out, with two or three more, scouting the lake shores, and will join us down among the islands, with the tidings he may gather. The Sergeant is too good a soldier to forget his rear while he is facing the enemy in front. It’s a thousand pities, Mabel, your father wasn’t born a general, as some of the English are who come among us; for I feel sartain he wouldn’t leave a Frencher in the Canadas a week, could he have his own way with them.”

“Shall we have enemies to face in front?” asked Mabel, smiling, and for the first time feeling a slight apprehension about the dangers of the expedition. “Are we likely to have an engagement?”

“If we have, Mabel, there will be men enough ready and willing to stand between you and harm. But you are a soldier’s daughter, and, we all know, have the spirit of one. Don’t let the fear of a battle keep your pretty eyes from sleeping.”

“I do feel braver out here in the woods, Pathfinder, than I ever felt before amid the weaknesses of the towns, although I have always tried to remember what I owe to my dear father.”

“Ay, your mother was so before you. ‘You will find Mabel, like her mother, no screamer, or a faint-hearted girl, to trouble a man in his need; but one who would encourage her mate, and help to keep his heart up when sorest prest by danger,’ said the Sergeant to me, before I ever laid eyes on that sweet countenance of yours — he did!”

“And why should my father have told you this, Pathfinder?” the girl demanded a little earnestly. “Perhaps he fancied you would think the better of me if you did not believe me a silly coward, as so many of my sex love to make themselves appear.”

Deception, unless it were at the expense of his enemies in the field — nay, concealment of even a thought — was so little in accordance with the Pathfinder’s very nature, that he was not a little embarrassed by this simple question. In such

a strait he involuntarily took refuge in a middle course, not revealing that which he fancied ought not to be told, nor yet absolutely concealing it.

"You must know, Mabel," said he, "that the Sergeant and I are old friends, and have stood side by side — or, if not actually side by side, I a little in advance, as became a scout, and your father with his own men, as better suited a soldier of the king — on many a hard fi't and bloody day. It's the way of us skirmishers to think little of the fight when the rifle has done cracking; and at night, around our fires, or on our marches, we talk of the things we love, just as you young women converse about your fancies and opinions when you get together to laugh over your ideas. Now it was natural that the Sergeant, having such a daughter as you, should love her better than anything else, and that he should talk of her oftener than of anything else — while I, having neither daughter, nor sister, nor mother, nor kith, nor kin, nor anything but the Delawares to love, I naturally chimed in, as it were, and got to love you, Mabel, before I ever saw you — yes, I did — just by talking about you so much."

"And now you *have* seen me," returned the smiling girl, whose unmoved and natural manner proved how little she was thinking of anything more than parental or fraternal regard, "you are beginning to see the folly of forming friendships for people before you know anything about them, except by hearsay."

"It wasn't friendship — it isn't friendship, Mabel, that I feel for you. I am the friend of the Delawares, and have been so from boyhood; but my feelings for them, or for the best of them, are not the same as those I got from the Sergeant for you; and, especially, now that I begin to know you better. I'm sometimes afeared it isn't wholesome for one who is much occupied in a very manly calling, like that of a guide or scout, or a soldier even, to form friendships for women — young women in particular — as they seem to me to lessen the love of enterprise, and to turn the feelings away from their gifts and natural occupations."

"You surely do not mean, Pathfinder, that a friendship for a girl like me would make you less bold, and more unwilling to meet the French than you were before?"

"Not so, not so. With you in danger, for instance, I fear I might become foolhardy; but before we became so intimate, as I may say, I loved to think of my scoutings, and of my marches, and outlyings, and fights, and other adventures: but now my mind cares less about them; I think more of the barracks, and of evenings passed in discourse, of feelings in which there are no wranglings and bloodshed, and of young women, and of their laughs and their cheerful, soft voices, their pleasant looks and their winning ways. I sometimes tell the Sergeant that he and his daughter will be the spoiling of one of the best and most experienced scouts on the lines."

"Not they, Pathfinder; they will try to make that which is already so excellent, perfect. You do not know us, if you think that either wishes to see you in the least changed. Remain as at present, the same honest, upright, conscientious, fearless, intelligent, trustworthy guide that you are, and neither my dear father nor myself can ever think of you differently from what we now do."

It was too dark for Mabel to note the workings of the countenance of her listener; but her own sweet face was turned towards him, as she spoke with an energy equal to her frankness, in a way to show how little embarrassed were her thoughts, and how sincere were her words. Her countenance was a little flushed, it is true; but it was with earnestness and truth of feeling, though no nerve thrilled, no limb trembled, no pulsation quickened. In short, her manner and appearance were those of a sincere-minded and frank girl, making such a declaration of good-will and regard for one of the other sex as she felt that his services and good qualities merited, without any of the emotion that invariably accompanies the consciousness of an inclination which might lead to softer disclosures.

The Pathfinder was too unpractised, however, to enter into distinctions of this kind, and his humble nature was encouraged by the directness and strength of the words he had just heard. Unwilling, if not unable, to say any more, he walked away, and stood leaning on his rifle and looking up at the stars for full ten minutes in profound silence.

In the meanwhile the interview on the bastion, to which we have already alluded, took place between Lundie and the Sergeant.

"Have the men's knapsacks been examined?" demanded Major Duncan, after he had cast his eye at a written report, handed to him by the Sergeant, but which it was too dark to read.

"All, your honor; and all are right."

"The ammunition — arms?"

"All in order, Major Duncan, and fit for any service."

"You have the men named in my own draft, Dunham?"

"Without an exception, sir. Better men could not be found in the regiment."

"You have need of the best of our men, Sergeant. This experiment has now been tried three times; always under one of the ensigns, who have flattered me with success, but have as often failed. After so much preparation and expense, I do not like to abandon the project entirely; but this will be the last effort; and the result will mainly depend on you and on the Pathfinder."

"You may count on us both, Major Duncan. The duty you have given us is not above our habits and experience, and I think it will be well done. I know that the Pathfinder will not be wanting."

"On that, indeed, it will be safe to rely. He is a most extraordinary man, Dunham — one who long puzzled me; but who, now that I understand him, commands as much of my respect as any general in his majesty's service."

"I was in hopes, sir, that you would come to look at the proposed marriage with Mabel as a thing I ought to wish and forward."

"As for that, Sergeant, time will show," returned Lundie, smiling; though here, too, the obscurity concealed the nicer shades of expression; "one woman is sometimes more difficult to manage than a whole regiment of men. By the way, you know that your would-be son-in-law, the Quartermaster, will be of the party; and I trust you will at least give him an equal chance in the trial for your daughter's smiles."

"If respect for his rank, sir, did not cause me to do this, your honor's wish would be sufficient."

"I thank you, Sergeant. We have served much together, and ought to value each other in our several stations. Understand me, however, I ask no more for Davy Muir than a clear field and no favor. In love, as in war, each man must gain his own victories. Are you certain that the rations have been properly calculated?"

"I'll answer for it, Major Duncan; but if they were not, we cannot suffer with two such hunters as Pathfinder and the Serpent in company."

"That will never do, Dunham," interrupted Lundie sharply; "and it comes of your American birth and American training. No thorough soldier ever relies on anything but his commissary for supplies; and I beg that no part of my regiment may be the first to set an example to the contrary."

"You have only to command, Major Duncan, to be obeyed; and yet, if I might presume, sir —"

"Speak freely, Sergeant; you are talking with a friend."

"I was merely about to say that I find even the Scotch soldiers like venison and birds quite as well as pork, when they are difficult to be had."

"That may be very true; but likes and dislikes have nothing to do with system. An army can rely on nothing but its commissaries. The irregularity of the provincials has played the devil with the king's service too often to be winked at any longer."

"General Braddock, your honor, might have been advised by Colonel Washington."

"Out upon your Washington! You're all provincials together, man, and uphold each other as if you were of a sworn confederacy."

"I believe his majesty has no more loyal subjects than the Americans, your honor."

"In that, Dunham, I'm thinking you're right; and I have been a little too warm, perhaps. I do not consider *you* a provincial, however, Sergeant; for though born in America, a better soldier never shouldered a musket."

"And Colonel Washington, your honor?"

"Well! — and Colonel Washington may be a useful subject too. He is the American prodigy; and I suppose I may as well give him all the credit you ask. You have no doubt of the skill of this Jasper Eau-douce?"

"The boy has been tried, sir, and found equal to all that can be required of him."

"He has a French name, and has passed much of his boyhood in the French colonies; has he French blood in his veins, Sergeant?"

"Not a drop, your honor. Jasper's father was an old comrade of my own, and his mother came of an honest and loyal

family in this very province.”

“How came he then so much among the French, and whence his name? He speaks the language of the Canadas, too, I find.”

“That is easily explained, Major Duncan. The boy was left under the care of one of our mariners in the old war, and he took to the water like a duck. Your honor knows that we have no ports on Ontario that can be named as such, and he naturally passed most of his time on the other side of the lake, where the French have had a few vessels these fifty years. He learned to speak their language, as a matter of course, and got his name from the Indians and Canadians, who are fond of calling men by their qualities, as it might be.”

“A French master is but a poor instructor for a British sailor, notwithstanding.”

“I beg your pardon, sir: Jasper Eau-douce was brought up under a real English seaman, one that had sailed under the king’s pennant, and may be called a thorough-bred; that is to say, a subject born in the colonies, but none the worse at his trade, I hope, Major Duncan, for that.”

“Perhaps not, Sergeant, perhaps not; nor any better. This Jasper behaved well, too, when I gave him the command of the *Scud*; no lad could have conducted himself more loyally or better.”

“Or more bravely, Major Duncan. I am sorry to see, sir, that you have doubts as to the fidelity of Jasper.”

“It is the duty of the soldier who is entrusted with the care of a distant and important post like this, Dunham, never to relax in his vigilance. We have two of the most artful enemies that the world has ever produced, in their several ways, to contend with — the Indians and the French — and nothing should be overlooked that can lead to injury.”

“I hope your honor considers me fit to be entrusted with any particular reason that may exist for doubting Jasper, since you have seen fit to entrust me with this command.”

“It is not that I doubt you, Dunham, that I hesitate to reveal all I may happen to know; but from a strong reluctance to circulate an evil report concerning one of whom I have hitherto thought well. You must think well of the Pathfinder, or you would not wish to give him your daughter?”

“For the Pathfinder’s honesty I will answer with my life, sir,” returned the Sergeant firmly, and not without a dignity of manner that struck his superior. “Such a man doesn’t know how to be false.”

“I believe you are right, Dunham; and yet this last information has unsettled all my old opinions. I have received an anonymous communication, Sergeant, advising me to be on my guard against Jasper Western, or Jasper Eau-douce, as he is called, who, it alleges, has been bought by the enemy, and giving me reason to expect that further and more precise information will soon be sent.”

“Letters without signatures to them, sir, are scarcely to be regarded in war.”

“Or in peace, Dunham. No one can entertain a lower opinion of the writer of an anonymous letter, in ordinary matters, than myself; the very act denotes cowardice, meanness, and baseness; and it usually is a token of falsehood, as well as of other vices. But in matters of war it is not exactly the same thing. Besides, several suspicious circumstances have been pointed out to me.”

“Such as is fit for an orderly to hear, your honor?”

“Certainly, one in whom I confide as much as in yourself Dunham. It is said, for instance, that your daughter and her party were permitted to escape the Iroquois, when they came in, merely to give Jasper credit with me. I am told that the gentry at Frontenac will care more for the capture of the *Scud*, with Sergeant Dunham and a party of men, together with the defeat of our favorite plan, than for the capture of a girl and the scalp of her uncle.”

“I understand the hint, sir, but I do not give it credit. Jasper can hardly be true, and Pathfinder false; and, as for the last, I would as soon distrust your honor as distrust him.”

“It would seem so, Sergeant; it would indeed seem so. But Jasper is not the Pathfinder, after all; and I will own, Dunham, I should put more faith in the lad if he didn’t speak French.”

“It’s no recommendation in my eyes, I assure your honor; but the boy learned it by compulsion, as it were, and ought not to be condemned too hastily for the circumstance, by your honor’s leave.”

“It’s a d — d lingo, and never did any one good — at least no British subject; for I suppose the French themselves must talk together in some language or other. I should have much more faith in this Jasper, did he know nothing of their

language. This letter has made me uneasy; and, were there another to whom I could trust the cutter, I would devise some means to detain him here. I have spoken to you already of a brother-in-law, who goes with you, Sergeant, and who is a sailor?"

"A real seafaring man, your honor, and somewhat prejudiced against fresh water. I doubt if he could be induced to risk his character on a lake, and I'm certain he never could find the station."

"The last is probably true, and then, the man cannot know enough of this treacherous lake to be fit for the employment. You will have to be doubly vigilant, Dunham. I give you full powers; and should you detect this Jasper in any treachery, make him a sacrifice at once to offended justice."

"Being in the service of the crown, your honor, he is amenable to martial law."

"Very true; then iron him, from his head to his heels, and send him up here in his own cutter. That brother-in-law of yours must be able to find the way back, after he has once travelled the road."

"I make no doubt, Major Duncan, we shall be able to do all that will be necessary should Jasper turn out as you seem to anticipate; though I think I would risk my life on his truth."

"I like your confidence — it speaks well for the fellow; but that infernal letter! there is such an air of truth about it; nay, there is so much truth in it, touching other matters."

"I think your honor said it wanted the name at the bottom; a great omission for an honest man to make."

"Quite right, Dunham, and no one but a rascal, and a cowardly rascal in the bargain, would write an anonymous letter on private affairs. It is different, however, in war; despatches are feigned, and artifice is generally allowed to be justifiable."

"Military manly artifices, sir, if you will; such as ambushes, surprises, feints, false attacks, and even spies; but I never heard of a true soldier who could wish to undermine the character of an honest young man by such means as these."

"I have met with many strange events, and some stranger people, in the course of my experience. But fare you well, Sergeant; I must detain you no longer. You are now on your guard, and I recommend to you untiring vigilance. I think Muir means shortly to retire; and, should you fully succeed in this enterprise, my influence will not be wanting in endeavoring to put you in the vacancy, to which you have many claims."

"I humbly thank your honor," coolly returned the Sergeant, who had been encouraged in this manner any time for the twenty preceding years, "and hope I shall never disgrace my station, whatever it may be. I am what nature and Providence have made me, and hope I'm satisfied."

"You have not forgotten the howitzer?"

"Jasper took it on board this morning, sir."

"Be wary, and do not trust that man unnecessarily. Make a confidant of Pathfinder at once; he may be of service in detecting any villainy that may be stirring. His simple honesty will favor his observation by concealing it. He *must* be true."

"For him, sir, my own head shall answer, or even my rank in the regiment. I have seen him too often tried to doubt him."

"Of all wretched sensations, Dunham, distrust, where one is compelled to confide, is the most painful. You have bethought you of the spare flints?"

"A sergeant is a safe commander for all such details, your honor."

"Well, then, give me your hand, Dunham. God bless you! and may you be successful! Muir means to retire — by the way, let the man have an equal chance with your daughter, for it may facilitate future operations about the promotion. One would retire more cheerfully with such a companion as Mabel, than in cheerless widowhood, and with nothing but oneself to love — and such a self, too, as Davy's!"

"I hope, sir, my child will make a prudent choice, and I think her mind is already pretty much made up in favor of Pathfinder. Still she shall have fair play, though disobedience is the next crime to mutiny."

"Have all the ammunition carefully examined and dried as soon as you arrive; the damp of the lake may affect it. And now, once more, farewell, Sergeant. Beware of that Jasper, and consult with Muir in any difficulty. I shall expect you to return, triumphant, this day month."

"God bless your honor! If anything should happen to me, I trust to you, Major Duncan, to care for an old soldier's character."

“Rely on me, Dunham — you will rely on a friend. Be vigilant: remember you will be in the very jaws of the lion; — pshaw! of no lion neither; but of treacherous tigers: in their very jaws, and beyond support. Have the flints counted and examined in the morning — and — farewell, Dunham, farewell!”

The Sergeant took the extended hand of his superior with proper respect, and they finally parted; Lundie hastening into his own movable abode, while the other left the fort, descended to the beach, and got into a boat.

It is not to be supposed that Sergeant Dunham, after he had parted from his commanding officer, was likely to forget the injunctions he had received. He thought highly of Jasper in general; but distrust had been insinuated between his former confidence and the obligations of duty; and, as he now felt that everything depended on his own vigilance, by the time the boat reached the side of the *Scud* he was in a proper humor to let no suspicious circumstance go unheeded, or any unusual movement in the young sailor pass without its comment. As a matter of course, he viewed things in the light suited to his peculiar mood; and his precautions, as well as his distrust, partook of the habits, opinions, and education of the man.

The *Scud's* kedge was lifted as soon as the boat with the Sergeant, who was the last person expected, was seen to quit the shore, and the head of the cutter was cast to the eastward by means of the sweeps. A few vigorous strokes of the latter, in which the soldiers aided, now sent the light craft into the line or the current that flowed from the river, when she was suffered to drift into the offing again. As yet there was no wind, the light and almost imperceptible air from the lake, that had existed previously to the setting of the sun, having entirely failed.

All this time an unusual quiet prevailed in the cutter. It appeared as if those on board of her felt that they were entering upon an uncertain enterprise, in the obscurity of night; and that their duty, the hour, and the manner of their departure lent a solemnity to their movements. Discipline also came in aid of these feelings. Most were silent; and those who did speak spoke seldom and in low voices. In this manner the cutter set slowly out into the lake, until she had got as far as the river current would carry her, when she became stationary, waiting for the usual land-breeze. An interval of half an hour followed, during the whole of which time the *Scud* lay as motionless as a log, floating on the water. While the little changes just mentioned were occurring in the situation of the vessel, notwithstanding the general quiet that prevailed, all conversation had not been repressed; for Sergeant Dunham, having first ascertained that both his daughter and her female companion were on the quarter-deck, led the Pathfinder to the after-cabin, where, closing the door with great caution, and otherwise making certain that he was beyond the reach of eavesdroppers, he commenced as follows:—

“It is now many years, my friend, since you began to experience the hardships and dangers of the woods in my company.”

“It is, Sergeant; yes it is. I sometimes fear I am too old for Mabel, who was not born until you and I had fought the Frenchers as comrades.”

“No fear on that account, Pathfinder. I was near your age before I prevailed on the mind of her mother; and Mabel is a steady, thoughtful girl, one that will regard character more than anything else. A lad like Jasper Eau-douce, for instance, will have no chance with her, though he is both young and comely.”

“Does Jasper think of marrying?” inquired the guide, simply but earnestly.

“I should hope not — at least, not until he has satisfied every one of his fitness to possess a wife.”

“Jasper is a gallant boy, and one of great gifts in his way; he may claim a wife as well as another.”

“To be frank with you, Pathfinder, I brought you here to talk about this very youngster. Major Duncan has received some information which has led him to suspect that Eau-douce is false, and in the pay of the enemy; I wish to hear your opinion on the subject.”

“Anan?”

“I say, the Major suspects Jasper of being a traitor — a French spy — or, what is worse, of being bought to betray us. He has received a letter to this effect, and has been charging me to keep an eye on the boy's movements; for he fears we shall meet with enemies when we least suspect it, and by his means.”

“Duncan of Lundie has told you this, Sergeant Dunham?”

“He has indeed, Pathfinder; and, though I have been loath to believe anything to the injury of Jasper, I have a feeling which tells me I ought to distrust him. Do you believe in presentiments, my friend?”

“In what, Sergeant?”

“Presentiments — a sort of secret foreknowledge of events that are about to happen. The Scotch of our regiment are great sticklers for such things; and my opinion of Jasper is changing so fast, that I begin to fear there must be some truth in their doctrines.”

“But you’ve been talking with Duncan of Lundie concerning Jasper, and his words have raised misgivings.”

“Not it, not so in the least; for, while conversing with the Major, my feelings were altogether the other way; and I endeavored to convince him all I could that he did the boy injustice. But there is no use in holding out against a presentiment, I find; and I fear there is something in the suspicion after all.”

“I know nothing of presentiments, Sergeant; but I have known Jasper Eau-douce since he was a boy, and I have as much faith in his honesty as I have in my own, or that of the Serpent himself.”

“But the Serpent, Pathfinder, has his tricks and ambushes in war as well as another.”

“Ay, them are his nat’ral gifts, and are such as belong to his people. Neither red-skin nor pale-face can deny natur’; but Chingachgook is not a man to feel a presentiment against.”

“That I believe; nor should I have thought ill of Jasper this very morning. It seems to me, Pathfinder, since I’ve taken up this presentiment, that the lad does not bustle about his deck naturally, as he used to do; but that he is silent and moody and thoughtful, like a man who has a load on his conscience.”

“Jasper is never noisy; and he tells me noisy ships are generally ill-worked ships. Master Cap agrees in this too. No, no; I will believe naught against Jasper until I see it. Send for your brother, Sergeant, and let us question him in this matter; for to sleep with distrust of one’s friend in the heart is like sleeping with lead there. I have no faith in your presentiments.”

The Sergeant, although he scarcely knew himself with what object, complied, and Cap was summoned to join in the consultation. As Pathfinder was more collected than his companion, and felt so strong a conviction of the good faith of the party accused, he assumed the office of spokesman.

“We have asked you to come down, Master Cap,” he commenced, “in order to inquire if you have remarked anything out of the common way in the movements of Eau-douce this evening.”

“His movements are common enough, I daresay, for fresh water, Master Pathfinder, though we should think most of his proceedings irregular down on the coast.”

“Yes, yes; we know you will never agree with the lad about the manner the cutter ought to be managed; but it is on another point we wish your opinion.”

The Pathfinder then explained to Cap the nature of the suspicions which the Sergeant entertained, and the reasons why they had been excited, so far as the latter had been communicated by Major Duncan.

“The youngster talks French, does he?” said Cap.

“They say he speaks it better than common,” returned the Sergeant gravely. “Pathfinder knows this to be true.”

“I’ll not gainsay it,” answered the guide; “at least, they tell me such is the fact. But this would prove nothing ag’in a Mississauga, and, least of all, ag’in one like Jasper. I speak the Mingo dialect myself, having learnt it while a prisoner among the reptyles; but who will say I am their friend? Not that I am an enemy, either, according to Indian notions; though I am their enemy, I will admit, agreeable to Christianity.”

“Ay Pathfinder; but Jasper did not get his French as a prisoner: he took it in his boyhood, when the mind is easily impressed, and gets its permanent notions; when nature has a presentiment, as it were, which way the character is likely to incline.”

“A very just remark,” added Cap, “for that is the time of life when we all learn the catechism, and other moral improvements. The Sergeant’s observation shows that he understands human nature, and I agree with him perfectly; it is a damnable thing for a youngster, up here, on this bit of fresh water, to talk French. If it were down on the Atlantic, now, where a seafaring man has occasion sometimes to converse with a pilot, or a linguister, in that language, I should not think so much of it — though we always look with suspicion, even there, at a shipmate who knows too much of the tongue; but up here, on Ontario, I hold it to be a most suspicious circumstance.”

“But Jasper must talk in French to the people on the other shore,” said Pathfinder, “or hold his tongue, as there are none but French to speak to.”

“You don’t mean to tell me, Pathfinder, that France lies hereaway, on the opposite coast?” cried Cap, jerking a thumb

over his shoulder in the direction of the Canadas; "that one side of this bit of fresh water is York, and the other France?"

"I mean to tell you this is York, and that is Upper Canada; and that English and Dutch and Indian are spoken in the first, and French and Indian in the last. Even the Mingos have got many of the French words in their dialect, and it is no improvement, neither."

"Very true: and what sort of people are the Mingos, my friend?" inquired the Sergeant, touching the other on his shoulder, by way of enforcing a remark, the inherent truth of which sensibly increased its value in the eyes of the speaker: "no one knows them better than yourself, and I ask you what sort of a tribe are they?"

"Jasper is no Mingo, Sergeant."

"He speaks French, and he might as well be, in that particular. Brother Cap, can you recollect no movement of this unfortunate young man, in the way of his calling, that would seem to denote treachery?"

"Not distinctly, Sergeant, though he has gone to work wrong-end foremost half his time. It is true that one of his hands coiled a rope against the sun, and he called it *querling* a rope, too, when I asked him what he was about; but I am not certain that anything was meant by it; though, I daresay, the French coil half their running rigging the wrong way, and may call it 'querling it down,' too, for that matter. Then Jasper himself belayed the end of the jib-halyards to a stretcher in the rigging, instead of bringing it to the mast, where they belong, at least among British sailors."

"I daresay Jasper may have got some Canada notions about working his craft, from being so much on the other side," Pathfinder interposed; "but catching an idee, or a word, isn't treachery and bad faith. I sometimes get an idee from the Mingos themselves; but my heart has always been with the Delawares. No, no, Jasper is true; and the king might trust him with his crown, just as he would trust his eldest son, who, as he is to wear it one day, ought to be the last man to wish to steal it."

"Fine talking, fine talking!" said Cap; "all fine talking, Master Pathfinder, but d — d little logic. In the first place, the king's majesty cannot lend his crown, it being contrary to the laws of the realm, which require him to wear it at all times, in order that his sacred person may be known, just as the silver oar is necessary to a sheriff's officer afloat. In the next place, it's high treason, by law, for the eldest son of his majesty ever to covet the crown, or to have a child, except in lawful wedlock, as either would derange the succession. Thus you see, friend Pathfinder that in order to reason truly, one must get under way, as it might be, on the right tack. Law is reason, and reason is philosophy, and philosophy is a steady drag; whence it follows that crowns are regulated by law, reason, and philosophy."

"I know little of all this; Master Cap; but nothing short of seeing and feeling will make me think Jasper Western a traitor."

"There you are wrong again, Pathfinder; for there is a way of proving a thing much more conclusively than either seeing or feeling, or by both together; and that is by a circumstance."

"It may be so in the settlements; but it is not so here on the lines."

"It is so in nature, which is monarch over all. There was a circumstance, just after we came on board this evening, that is extremely suspicious, and which may be set down at once as a makeweight against this lad. Jasper bent on the king's ensign with his own hands; and, while he pretended to be looking at Mabel and the soldier's wife, giving directions about showing them below here, and a that, he got the flag union down!"

"That might have been accident," returned the Sergeant, "for such a thing has happened to myself; besides, the halyards lead to a pulley, and the flag would have come right, or not, according to the manner in which the lad hoisted it."

"A pulley!" exclaimed Cap, with strong disgust; "I wish, Sergeant Dunham, I could prevail on you to use proper terms. An ensign-halyard-block is no more a pulley than your halberd is a boarding-pike. It is true that by hoisting on one part, another part would go uppermost; but I look upon that affair of the ensign, now you have mentioned your suspicions, as a circumstance, and shall bear it in mind. I trust supper is not to be overlooked, however, even if we have a hold full of traitors."

"It will be duly attended to, brother Cap; but I shall count on you for aid in managing the *Scud*, should anything occur to induce me to arrest Jasper."

"I'll not fail you, Sergeant; and in such an event you'll probably learn what this cutter can really perform; for, as yet, I fancy it is pretty much matter of guesswork."



“Well, for my part,” said Pathfinder, drawing a heavy sigh, “I shall cling to the hope of Jasper’s innocence, and recommend plain dealing, by asking the lad himself, without further delay, whether he is or is not a traitor. I’ll put Jasper Western against all the presentiments and circumstances in the colony.”

“That will never do,” rejoined the Sergeant. “The responsibility of this affair rests with me, and I request and enjoin that nothing be said to any one without my knowledge. We will all keep watchful eyes about us, and take proper note of circumstances.”

“Ay, ay! circumstances are the things after all,” returned Cap. “One circumstance is worth fifty facts. That I know to be the law of the realm. Many a man has been hanged on circumstances.”

The conversation now ceased, and, after a short delay, the whole party returned to the deck, each individual disposed to view the conduct of the suspected Jasper in the manner most suited to his own habits and character.



## CHAPTER 14.

*Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,  
So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,  
Drew Priam's Curtain in the dead of night,  
And would have told him, half his Troy was burned.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

All this time matters were elsewhere passing in their usual train. Jasper, like the weather and his vessel, seemed to be waiting for the land-breeze; while the soldiers, accustomed to early rising, had, to a man, sought their pallets in the main hold. None remained on deck but the people of the cutter, Mr. Muir, and the two females. The Quartermaster was endeavoring to render himself agreeable to Mabel, while our heroine herself, little affected by his assiduities, which she ascribed partly to the habitual gallantry of a soldier, and partly, perhaps, to her own pretty face, was enjoying the peculiarities of a scene and situation which, to her, were full of the charms of novelty.

The sails had been hoisted, but as yet not a breath of air was in motion; and so still and placid was the lake, that not the smallest motion was perceptible in the cutter. She had drifted in the river-current to a distance a little exceeding a quarter of a mile from the land, and there she lay, beautiful in her symmetry and form, but like a fixture. Young Jasper was on the quarter-deck, near enough to hear occasionally the conversation which passed; but too diffident of his own claim, and too intent on his duties, to attempt to mingle in it. The fine blue eyes of Mabel followed his motions in curious expectation, and more than once the Quartermaster had to repeat his compliments before she heard them, so intent was she on the little occurrences of the vessel, and, we might add, so indifferent to the eloquence of her companion. At length, even Mr. Muir became silent, and there was a deep stillness on the water. Presently an oar-blade fell in a boat beneath the fort, and the sound reached the cutter as distinctly as if it had been produced on her deck. Then came a murmur, like a sigh of the night, a fluttering of the canvas, the creaking of the boom, and the flap of the jib. These well-known sounds were followed by a slight heel in the cutter, and by the bellying of all the sails.

"Here's the wind, Anderson," called out Jasper to the oldest of his sailors; "take the helm."

This brief order was obeyed; the helm was put up, the cutter's bows fell off, and in a few minutes the water was heard murmuring under her head, as the *Scud* glanced through the lake at the rate of five miles in the hour. All this passed in profound silence, when Jasper again gave the order to "ease off the sheets a little and keep her along the land."

It was at this instant that the party from the after-cabin reappeared on the quarter-deck.

"You've no inclination, Jasper lad, to trust yourself too near our neighbours the French," observed Muir, who took that occasion to recommence the discourse. "Well, well, your prudence will never be questioned by me, for I like the Canadas as little as you can possibly like them yourself."

"I hug this shore, Mr. Muir, on account of the wind. The land-breeze is always freshest close in, provided you are not so near as to make a lee of the trees. We have Mexico Bay to cross; and that, on the present course, will give us quite offing enough."

"I'm right glad it's not the Bay of Mexico," put in Cap, "which is a part of the world I would rather not visit in one of your inland craft. Does your cutter bear a weather helm, master Eau-douce?"

"She is easy on her rudder, master Cap; but likes looking up at the breeze as well as another, when in lively motion."

"I suppose you have such things as reefs, though you can hardly have occasion to use them?"

Mabel's bright eye detected the smile that gleamed for an instant on Jasper's handsome face; but no one else saw that momentary exhibition of surprise and contempt.

"We have reefs, and often have occasion to use them," quietly returned the young man. "Before we get in, Master Cap, an opportunity may offer to show you the manner in which we do so; for there is easterly weather brewing, and the wind cannot chop, even on the ocean itself, more readily than it flies round on Lake Ontario."

"So much for knowing no better! I have seen the wind in the Atlantic fly round like a coach-wheel, in a way to keep your sails shaking for an hour, and the ship would become perfectly motionless from not knowing which way to turn."

"We have no such sudden changes here, certainly," Jasper mildly answered; "though we think ourselves liable to

unexpected shifts of wind. I hope, however, to carry this land-breeze as far as the first islands; after which there will be less danger of our being seen and followed by any of the look-out boats from Frontenac."

"Do you think the French keep spies out on the broad lake, Jasper?" inquired the Pathfinder.

"We know they do; one was off Oswego during the night of Monday last. A bark canoe came close in with the eastern point, and landed an Indian and an officer. Had you been outlying that night, as usual, we should have secured one, if not both of them."

It was too dark to betray the color that deepened on the weather-burnt features of the guide; for he felt the consciousness of having lingered in the fort that night, listening to the sweet tones of Mabel's voice as she sang ballads to her father, and gazing at the countenance which, to him, was radiant with charms. Probity in thought and deed being the distinguishing quality of this extraordinary man's mind, while he felt that a sort of disgrace ought to attach to his idleness on the occasion mentioned, the last thought that could occur would be to attempt to palliate or deny his negligence.

"I confess it, Jasper, I confess it," said he humbly. "Had I been out that night — and I now recollect no sufficient reason why I was not — it might, indeed, have turned out as you say."

"It was the evening you passed with us, Pathfinder," Mabel innocently remarked; "surely one who lives so much of his time in the forest, in front of the enemy, may be excused for giving a few hours of his time to an old friend and his daughter."

"Nay, nay, I've done little else but idle since we reached the garrison," returned the other, sighing; "and it is well that the lad should tell me of it: the idler needs a rebuke — yes, he needs a rebuke."

"Rebuke, Pathfinder! I never dreamt of saying anything disagreeable, and least of all would I think of rebuking you, because a solitary spy and an Indian or two have escaped us. Now I know where you were, I think your absence the most natural thing in the world."

"I think nothing of what you said, Jasper, since it was deserved. We are all human, and all do wrong."

"This is unkind, Pathfinder."

"Give me your hand, lad, give me your hand. It wasn't you that gave the lesson; it was conscience."

"Well, well," interrupted Cap; "now this latter matter is settled to the satisfaction of all parties, perhaps you will tell us how it happened to be known that there were spies near us so lately. This looks amazingly like a circumstance."

As the mariner uttered the last sentence, he pressed a foot slyly on that of the Sergeant, and nudged the guide with his elbow, winking at the same time, though this sign was lost in the obscurity.

"It is known, because their trail was found next day by the Serpent, and it was that of a military boot and a moccasin. One of our hunters, moreover, saw the canoe crossing towards Frontenac next morning."

"Did the trail lead near the garrison, Jasper?" Pathfinder asked in a manner so meek and subdued that it resembled the tone of a rebuked schoolboy. "Did the trail lead near the garrison, lad?"

"We thought not; though, of course, it did not cross the river. It was followed down to the eastern point, at the river's mouth, where what was doing in port, might be seen; but it did not cross, as we could discover."

"And why didn't you get under weigh, Master Jasper," Cap demanded, "and give chase? On Tuesday morning it blew a good breeze; one in which this cutter might have run nine knots."

"That may do on the ocean, Master Cap," put in Pathfinder, "but it would not do here. Water leaves no trail, and a Mingo and a Frenchman are a match for the devil in a pursuit."

"Who wants a trail when the chase can be seen from the deck, as Jasper here said was the case with this canoe? and it mattered nothing if there were twenty of your Mingos and Frenchmen, with a good British-built bottom in their wake. I'll engage, Master Eau-douce, had you given me a call that said Tuesday morning, that we should have overhauled the blackguards."

"I daresay, Master Cap, that the advice of as old a seaman as you might have done no harm to as young a sailor as myself, but it is a long and a hopeless chase that has a bark canoe in it."

"You would have had only to press it hard, to drive it ashore."

"Ashore, master Cap! You do not understand our lake navigation at all, if you suppose it an easy matter to force a bark canoe ashore. As soon as they find themselves pressed, these bubbles paddle right into the wind's eye, and before you know

it, you find yourself a mile or two dead under their lee.”

“You don’t wish me to believe, Master Jasper, that any one is so heedless of drowning as to put off into this lake in one of them eggshells when there is any wind?”

“I have often crossed Ontario in a bark canoe, even when there has been a good deal of sea on. Well managed, they are the driest boats of which we have any knowledge.”

Cap now led his brother-in-law and Pathfinder aside, when he assured him that the admission of Jasper concerning the spies was “a circumstance,” and “a strong circumstance,” and as such it deserved his deliberate investigation; while his account of the canoes was so improbable as to wear the appearance of brow-beating the listeners. Jasper spoke confidently of the character of the two individuals who had landed, and this Cap deemed pretty strong proof that he knew more about them than was to be gathered from a mere trail. As for moccasins, he said that they were worn in that part of the world by white men as well as by Indians; he had purchased a pair himself; and boots, it was notorious, did not particularly make a soldier. Although much of this logic was thrown away on the Sergeant, still it produced some effect. He thought it a little singular himself, that there should have been spies detected so near the fort and he know nothing of it; nor did he believe that this was a branch of knowledge that fell particularly within the sphere of Jasper. It was true that the *Scud* had, once or twice, been sent across the lake to land men of this character, or to bring them off; but then the part played by Jasper, to his own certain knowledge, was very secondary, the master of the cutter remaining as ignorant as any one else of the purport of the visits of those whom he had carried to and fro; nor did he see why he alone, of all present, should know anything of the late visit. Pathfinder viewed the matter differently. With his habitual diffidence, he reproached himself with a neglect of duty, and that knowledge, of which the want struck him as a fault in one whose business it was to possess it, appeared a merit in the young man. He saw nothing extraordinary in Jasper’s knowing the facts he had related; while he did feel it was unusual, not to say disgraceful, that he himself now heard of them for the first time.

“As for moccasins, Master Cap,” said he, when a short pause invited him to speak, “they may be worn by pale-faces as well as by red-skins, it is true, though they never leave the same trail on the foot of one as on the foot of the other. Any one who is used to the woods can tell the footstep of an Indian from the footstep of a white man, whether it be made by a boot or a moccasin. It will need better evidence than this to persuade me into the belief that Jasper is false.”

“You will allow, Pathfinder, that there are such things in the world as traitors?” put in Cap logically.

“I never knew an honest-minded Mingo — one that you could put faith in, if he had a temptation to deceive you. Cheating seems to be their gift, and I sometimes think they ought to be pitied for it, rather than persecuted.”

“Then why not believe that this Jasper may have the same weakness? A man is a man, and human nature is sometimes but a poor concern, as I know by experience.”

This was the opening of another long and desultory conversation, in which the probability of Jasper’s guilt or innocence was argued *pro* and *con*, until both the Sergeant and his brother-in-law had nearly reasoned themselves into settled convictions in favor of the first, while their companion grew sturdier and sturdier in his defence of the accused, and still more fixed in his opinion of his being unjustly charged with treachery. In this there was nothing out of the common course of things; for there is no more certain way of arriving at any particular notion, than by undertaking to defend it; and among the most obstinate of our opinions may be classed those which are derived from discussions in which we affect to search for truth, while in reality we are only fortifying prejudice.

By this time the Sergeant had reached a state of mind that disposed him to view every act of the young sailor with distrust, and he soon got to coincide with his relative in deeming the peculiar knowledge of Jasper, in reference to the spies, a branch of information that certainly did not come within the circle of his regular duties, as “a circumstance.”

While this matter was thus discussed near the taffrail, Mabel sat silently by the companion-way, Mr. Muir having gone below to look after his personal comforts, and Jasper standing a little aloof, with his arms crossed, and his eyes wandering from the sails to the clouds, from the clouds to the dusky outline of the shore, from the shore to the lake, and from the lake back again to the sails. Our heroine, too, began to commune with her own thoughts. The excitement of the late journey, the incidents which marked the day of her arrival at the fort, the meeting with a father who was virtually a stranger to her, the novelty of her late situation in the garrison, and her present voyage, formed a vista for the mind’s eye to look back through, which seemed lengthened into months. She could with difficulty believe that she had so recently left the town, with all the usages of civilized life; and she wondered in particular that the incidents which had occurred during the descent of the

Oswego had made so little impression on her mind. Too inexperienced to know that events, when crowded, have the effect of time, or that the quick succession of novelties that pass before us in travelling elevates objects, in a measure, to the dignity of events, she drew upon her memory for days and dates, in order to make certain that she had known Jasper, and the Pathfinder, and her own father, but little more than a fortnight. Mabel was a girl of heart rather than of imagination, though by no means deficient in the last, and she could not easily account for the strength of her feelings in connection with those who were so lately strangers to her; for she was not sufficiently accustomed to analyze her sensations to understand the nature of the influences that have just been mentioned. As yet, however, her pure mind was free from the blight of distrust, and she had no suspicion of the views of either of her suitors; and one of the last thoughts that could have voluntarily disturbed her confidence would have been to suppose it possible either of her companions was a traitor to his king and country.

America, at the time of which we are writing, was remarkable for its attachment to the German family that then sat on the British throne; for, as is the fact with all provinces, the virtues and qualities that are proclaimed near the centre of power, as incense and policy, get to be a part of political faith with the credulous and ignorant at a distance. This truth is just as apparent to-day, in connection with the prodigies of the republic, as it then was in connection with those distant rulers, whose merits it was always safe to applaud, and whose demerits it was treason to reveal. It is a consequence of this mental dependence, that public opinion is so much placed at the mercy of the designing; and the world, in the midst of its idle boasts of knowledge and improvement, is left to receive its truths, on all such points as touch the interests of the powerful and managing, through such a medium, and such a medium only, as may serve the particular views of those who pull the wires. Pressed upon by the subjects of France, who were then encircling the British colonies with a belt of forts and settlements that completely secured the savages for allies, it would have been difficult to say whether the Americans loved the English more than they hated the French; and those who then lived probably would have considered the alliance which took place between the cis-Atlantic subjects and the ancient rivals of the British crown, some twenty years later, as an event entirely without the circle of probabilities. Disaffection was a rare offence; and, most of all, would treason, that should favor France or Frenchmen, have been odious in the eyes of the provincials. The last thing that Mabel would suspect of Jasper was the very crime with which he now stood secretly charged; and if others near her endured the pains of distrust, she, at least, was filled with the generous confidence of a woman. As yet no whisper had reached her ear to disturb the feeling of reliance with which she had early regarded the young sailor, and her own mind would have been the last to suggest such a thought of itself. The pictures of the past and of the present, therefore, that exhibited themselves so rapidly to her active imagination, were unclouded with a shade that might affect any in whom she felt an interest; and ere she had mused, in the manner related, a quarter of an hour, the whole scene around her was filled with unalloyed satisfaction.

The season and the night, to represent them truly, were of a nature to stimulate the sensations which youth, health, and happiness are wont to associate with novelty. The weather was warm, as is not always the case in that region even in summer, while the air that came off the land, in breathing currents, brought with it the coolness and fragrance of the forest. The wind was far from being fresh, though there was enough of it to drive the *Scud* merrily ahead, and, perhaps, to keep attention alive, in the uncertainty that more or less accompanies darkness. Jasper, however, appeared to regard it with complacency, as was apparent by what he said in a short dialogue that now occurred between him and Mabel.

"At this rate, Eau-douce,"— for so Mabel had already learned to style the young sailor — said our heroine, "we cannot be long in reaching our place of destination."

"Has your father then told you what that is, Mabel?"

"He has told me nothing; my father is too much of a soldier, and too little used to have a family around him, to talk of such matters. Is it forbidden to say whither we are bound?"

"It cannot be far, while we steer in this direction, for sixty or seventy miles will take us into the St. Lawrence, which the French might make too hot for us; and no voyage on this lake can be very long."

"So says my uncle Cap; but to me, Jasper, Ontario and the ocean appear very much the same."

"You have then been on the ocean; while I, who pretend to be a sailor, have never yet seen salt water. You must have a great contempt for such a mariner as myself, in your heart, Mabel Dunham?"

"Then I have no such thing in my heart, Jasper Eau-douce. What right have I, a girl without experience or knowledge, to despise any, much less one like you, who are trusted by the Major, and who command a vessel like this? I have never

been on the ocean, though I have seen it; and, I repeat, I see no difference between this lake and the Atlantic."

"Nor in them that sail on both? I was afraid, Mabel, your uncle had said so much against us fresh-water sailors, that you had begun to look upon us as little better than pretenders?"

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that account, Jasper; for I know my uncle, and he says as many things against those who live ashore, when at York, as he now says against those who sail on fresh water. No, no, neither my father nor myself think anything of such opinions. My uncle Cap, if he spoke openly, would be found to have even a worse notion of a soldier than of a sailor who never saw the sea."

"But your father, Mabel, has a better opinion of soldiers than of any one else? he wishes you to be the wife of a soldier?"

"Jasper Eau-douce! — I the wife of a soldier! My father wishes it! Why should he wish any such thing? What soldier is there in the garrison that I could marry — that he could *wish me* to marry?"

"One may love a calling so well as to fancy it will cover a thousand imperfections."

"But one is not likely to love his own calling so well as to cause him to overlook everything else. You say my father wishes me to marry a soldier; and yet there is no soldier at Oswego that he would be likely to give me to. I am in an awkward position; for while I am not good enough to be the wife of one of the gentlemen of the garrison, I think even you will admit, Jasper, I am too good to be the wife of one of the common soldiers."

As Mabel spoke thus frankly she blushed, she knew not why, though the obscurity concealed the fact from her companion; and she laughed faintly, like one who felt that the subject, however embarrassing it might be, deserved to be treated fairly. Jasper, it would seem, viewed her position differently from herself.

"It is true Mabel," said he, "you are not what is called a lady, in the common meaning of the word."

"Not in any meaning, Jasper," the generous girl eagerly interrupted: "on that head, I have no vanities, I hope. Providence has made me the daughter of a sergeant, and I am content to remain in the station in which I was born."

"But all do not remain in the stations in which they were born, Mabel; for some rise above them, and some fall below them. Many sergeants have become officers — even generals; and why may not sergeants' daughters become officers' ladies?"

"In the case of Sergeant Dunham's daughter, I know no better reason than the fact that no officer is likely to wish to make her his wife," returned Mabel, laughing.

"*You* may think so; but there are some in the 55th that know better. There is certainly one officer in that regiment, Mabel, who does wish to make you his wife."

Quick as the flashing lightning, the rapid thoughts of Mabel Dunham glanced over the five or six subalterns of the corps, who, by age and inclinations, would be the most likely to form such a wish; and we should do injustice to her habits, perhaps, were we not to say that a lively sensation of pleasure rose momentarily in her bosom, at the thought of being raised above a station which, whatever might be her professions of contentment, she felt that she had been too well educated to fill with perfect satisfaction. But this emotion was as transient as it was sudden; for Mabel Dunham was a girl of too much pure and womanly feeling to view the marriage tie through anything so worldly as the mere advantages of station. The passing emotion was a thrill produced by factitious habits, while the more settled opinion which remained was the offspring of nature and principles.

"I know no officer in the 55th, or any other regiment, who would be likely to do so foolish a thing; nor do I think I myself would do so foolish a thing as to marry an officer."

"Foolish, Mabel!"

"Yes, foolish, Jasper. You know, as well as I can know, what the world would think of such matters; and I should be sorry, very sorry, to find that my husband ever regretted that he had so far yielded to a fancy for a face or a figure as to have married the daughter of one so much his inferior as a sergeant."

"*Your* husband, Mabel, will not be so likely to think of the father as to think of the daughter."

The girl was talking with spirit, though feeling evidently entered into her part of the discourse; but she paused for nearly a minute after Jasper had made the last observation before she uttered another word. Then she continued, in a manner less playful, and one critically attentive might have fancied in a manner slightly melancholy —

"Parent and child ought so to live as not to have two hearts, or two modes of feeling and thinking. A common interest in all things I should think as necessary to happiness in man and wife, as between the other members of the same family. Most of all, ought neither the man nor the woman to have any unusual cause for unhappiness, the world furnishing so many of itself."

"Am I to understand, then, Mabel, you would refuse to marry an officer, merely because he was an officer?"

"Have you a right to ask such a question, Jasper?" said Mabel smiling.

"No other right than what a strong desire to see you happy can give, which, after all, may be very little. My anxiety has been increased, from happening to know that it is your father's intention to persuade you to marry Lieutenant Muir."

"My dear, dear father can entertain no notion so ridiculous — no notion so cruel!"

"Would it, then, be cruel to wish you the wife of a quartermaster?"

"I have told you what I think on that subject, and cannot make my words stronger. Having answered you so frankly, Jasper, I have a right to ask how you know that my father thinks of any such thing?"

"That he has chosen a husband for you, I know from his own mouth; for he has told me this much during our frequent conversations while he has been superintending the shipment of the stores; and that Mr. Muir is to offer for you, I know from the officer himself, who has told me as much. By putting the two things together, I have come to the opinion mentioned."

"May not my dear father, Jasper," — Mabel's face glowed like fire while she spoke, though her words escaped her slowly, and by a sort of involuntary impulse — "may not my dear father have been thinking of another? It does not follow, from what you say, that Mr. Muir was in his mind."

"Is it not probable, Mabel, from all that has passed? What brings the Quartermaster here? He has never found it necessary before to accompany the parties that have gone below. He thinks of you for his wife; and your father has made up his own mind that you shall be so. You must see, Mabel, that Mr. Muir follows *you*?"

Mabel made no answer. Her feminine instinct had, indeed, told her that she was an object of admiration with the Quartermaster; though she had hardly supposed to the extent that Jasper believed; and she, too, had even gathered from the discourse of her father that he thought seriously of having her disposed of in marriage; but by no process of reasoning could she ever have arrived at the inference that Mr. Muir was to be the man. She did not believe it now, though she was far from suspecting the truth. Indeed, it was her own opinion that these casual remarks of her father, which had struck her, had proceeded from a general wish to have her settled, rather than from any desire to see her united to any particular individual. These thoughts, however, she kept secret; for self-respect and feminine reserve showed her the impropriety of making them the subject of discussion with her present companion. By way of changing the conversation, therefore, after the pause had lasted long enough to be embarrassing to both parties, she said, "Of one thing you may be certain, Jasper — and that is all I wish to say on the subject — Lieutenant Muir, though he were a colonel, will never be the husband of Mabel Dunham. And now, tell me of your voyage; — when will it end?"

"That is uncertain. Once afloat, we are at the mercy of the winds and waves. Pathfinder will tell you that he who begins to chase the deer in the morning cannot tell where he will sleep at night."

"But we are not chasing a deer, nor is it morning; so Pathfinder's moral is thrown away."

"Although we are not chasing a deer, we are after that which may be as hard to catch. I can tell you no more than I have said already; for it is our duty to be close-mouthed, whether anything depends on it or not. I am afraid, however, I shall not keep you long enough in the *Scud* to show you what she can do at need."

"I think a woman unwise who ever marries a sailor," said Mabel abruptly, and almost involuntarily.

"This is a strange opinion; why do you hold it?"

"Because a sailor's wife is certain to have a rival in his vessel. My uncle Cap, too, says that a sailor should never marry."

"He means salt-water sailors," returned Jasper, laughing. "If he thinks wives not good enough for those who sail on the ocean, he will fancy them just suited to those who sail on the lakes. I hope, Mabel, you do not take your opinions of us fresh-water mariners from all that Master Cap says."

"Sail, ho!" exclaimed the very individual of whom they were conversing; "or boat, ho! would be nearer the truth."

Jasper ran forward; and, sure enough, a small object was discernible about a hundred yards ahead of the cutter, and

nearly on her lee bow. At the first glance, he saw it was a bark canoe; for, though the darkness prevented hues from being distinguished, the eye that had become accustomed to the night might discern forms at some little distance; and the eye which, like Jasper's, had long been familiar with things aquatic, could not be at a loss in discovering the outlines necessary to come to the conclusion he did.

"This may be an enemy," the young man remarked; "and it may be well to overhaul him."

"He is paddling with all his might, lad," observed the Pathfinder, "and means to cross your bows and get to windward, when you might as well chase a full-grown buck on snow-shoes!"

"Let her luff," cried Jasper to the man at the helm. "Luff up, till she shakes. There, steady, and hold all that."

The helmsman complied; and, as the *Scud* was now dashing the water aside merrily, a minute or two put the canoe so far to leeward as to render escape impracticable. Jasper now sprang to the helm himself and, by judicious and careful handling, he got so near his chase that it was secured by a boat-hook. On receiving an order, the two persons who were in the canoe left it, and no sooner had they reached the deck of the cutter than they were found to be Arrowhead and his wife.





## CHAPTER 15.

*What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,  
That learning is too proud to gather up;  
But which the poor and the despised of all  
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought?  
Tell me — and I will tell thee what is truth.*

—COWPER.

The meeting with the Indian and his wife excited no surprise in the majority of those who witnessed the occurrence; but Mabel, and all who knew of the manner in which this chief had been separated from the party of Cap, simultaneously entertained suspicions, which it was far easier to feel than to follow out by any plausible clue to certainty. Pathfinder, who alone could converse freely with the prisoners, for such they might now be considered, took Arrowhead aside, and held a long conversation with him, concerning the reasons of the latter for having deserted his charge and the manner in which he had been since employed.

The Tuscarora met these inquiries, and he gave his answers with the stoicism of an Indian. As respects the separation, his excuses were very simply made, and they seemed to be sufficiently plausible. When he found that the party was discovered in its place of concealment, he naturally sought his own safety, which he secured by plunging into the woods. In a word, he had run away in order to save his life.

“This is well,” returned Pathfinder, affecting to believe the other’s apologies; “my brother did very wisely; but his woman followed?”

“Do not the pale-faces’ women follow their husbands? Would not Pathfinder have looked back to see if one he loved was coming?”

This appeal was made to the guide while he was in a most fortunate frame of mind to admit its force; for Mabel and her blandishments and constancy were becoming images familiar to his thoughts. The Tuscarora, though he could not trace the reason, saw that his excuse was admitted, and he stood with quiet dignity awaiting the next inquiry.

“This is reasonable and natural,” returned Pathfinder; “this is natural, and may be so. A woman would be likely to follow the man to whom she had plighted faith, and husband and wife are one flesh. Your words are honest, Tuscarora,” changing the language to the dialect of the other. “Your words are honest, and very pleasant and just. But why has my brother been so long from the fort? His friends have thought of him often, but have never seen him.”

“If the doe follows the buck, ought not the buck to follow the doe?” answered the Tuscarora, smiling, as he laid a finger significantly on the shoulder of his interrogator. “Arrowhead’s wife followed Arrowhead; it was right in Arrowhead to follow his wife. She lost her way, and they made her cook in a strange wigwam.”

“I understand you, Tuscarora. The woman fell into the hands of the Mingos, and you kept upon their trail.”

“Pathfinder can see a reason as easily as he can see the moss on the trees. It is so.”

“And how long have you got the woman back, and in what manner has it been done?”

“Two suns. The Dew-of-June was not long in coming when her husband whispered to her the path.”

“Well, well, all this seems natural, and according to matrimony. But, Tuscarora, how did you get that canoe, and why are you paddling towards the St. Lawrence instead of the garrison?”

“Arrowhead can tell his own from that of another. This canoe is mine; I found it on the shore near the fort.”

“That sounds reasonable, too, for the canoe does belong to the man, and an Indian would make few words about taking it. Still, it is extraordinary that we saw nothing of the fellow and his wife, for the canoe must have left the river before we did ourselves.”

This idea, which passed rapidly through the mind of the guide, was now put to the Indian in the shape of a question.

“Pathfinder knows that a warrior can have shame. The father would have asked me for his daughter, and I could not give her to him. I sent the Dew-of-June for the canoe, and no one spoke to the woman. A Tuscarora woman would not be free in speaking to strange men.”

All this, too, was plausible, and in conformity with Indian character and customs. As was usual, Arrowhead had

received one half of his compensation previously to quitting the Mohawk; and his refraining to demand the residue was a proof of that conscientious consideration of mutual rights that quite as often distinguishes the morality of a savage as that of a Christian. To one as upright as Pathfinder, Arrowhead had conducted himself with delicacy and propriety, though it would have been more in accordance with his own frank nature to have met the father, and abided by the simple truth. Still, accustomed to the ways of Indians, he saw nothing out of the ordinary track of things in the course the other had taken.

"This runs like water flowing down hill, Arrowhead," he answered, after a little reflection, "and truth obliges me to own it. It was the gift of a red-skin to act in this way, though I do not think it was the gift of a pale-face. You would not look upon the grief of the girl's father?"

Arrowhead made a quiet inclination of the body as if to assent.

"One thing more my brother will tell me," continued Pathfinder, "and there will be no cloud between his wigwam and the strong-house of the Yengeese. If he can blow away this bit of fog with his breath, his friends will look at him as he sits by his own fire, and he can look at them as they lay aside their arms, and forget that they are warriors. Why was the head of Arrowhead's canoe looking towards the St. Lawrence, where there are none but enemies to be found?"

"Why were the Pathfinder and his friends looking the same way?" asked the Tuscarora calmly. "A Tuscarora may look in the same direction as a Yengeese."

"Why, to own the truth, Arrowhead, we are out scouting like; that is, sailing — in other words, we are on the king's business, and we have a right to be here, though we may not have a right to say *why* we are here."

"Arrowhead saw the big canoe, and he loves to look on the face of Eau-douce. He was going towards the sun at evening in order to seek his wigwam; but, finding that the young sailor was going the other way, he turned that he might look in the same direction. Eau-douce and Arrowhead were together on the last trail."

"This may all be true, Tuscarora, and you are welcome. You shall eat of our venison, and then we must separate. The setting sun is behind us, and both of us move quick: my brother will get too far from that which he seeks, unless he turns round."

Pathfinder now returned to the others, and repeated the result of his examination. He appeared himself to believe that the account of Arrowhead might be true, though he admitted that caution would be prudent with one he disliked; but his auditors, Jasper excepted, seemed less disposed to put faith in the explanations.

"This chap must be ironed at once, brother Dunham," said Cap, as soon as Pathfinder finished his narration; "he must be turned over to the master-at-arms, if there is any such officer on fresh water, and a court-martial ought to be ordered as soon as we reach port."

"I think it wisest to detain the fellow," the Sergeant answered; "but irons are unnecessary so long as he remains in the cutter. In the morning the matter shall be inquired into."

Arrowhead was now summoned and told the decision. The Indian listened gravely, and made no objections. On the contrary, he submitted with the calm and reserved dignity with which the American aborigines are known to yield to fate; and he stood apart, an attentive but calm observer of what was passing. Jasper caused the cutter's sails to be filled, and the *Scud* resumed her course.

It was now getting near the hour to set the watch, and when it was usual to retire for the night. Most of the party went below, leaving no one on deck but Cap, the Sergeant, Jasper, and two of the crew. Arrowhead and his wife also remained, the former standing aloof in proud reserve, and the latter exhibiting, by her attitude and passiveness, the meek humility that characterizes an Indian woman.

"You will find a place for your wife below, Arrowhead, where my daughter will attend to her wants," said the Sergeant kindly, who was himself on the point of quitting the deck; "yonder is a sail where you may sleep yourself."

"I thank my father. The Tuscaroras are not poor. The woman will look for my blankets in the canoe."

"As you wish, my friend. We think it necessary to detain you; but not necessary to confine or to maltreat you. Send your squaw into the canoe for the blankets and you may follow her yourself, and hand us up the paddles. As there may be some sleepy heads in the *Scud*, Eau-douce," added the Sergeant in a lower tone, "it may be well to secure the paddles."

Jasper assented, and Arrowhead and his wife, with whom resistance appeared to be out of the question, silently

complied with the directions. A few expressions of sharp rebuke passed from the Indian to his wife, while both were employed in the canoe, which the latter received with submissive quiet, immediately repairing an error she had made by laying aside the blanket she had taken and searching for another that was more to her tyrant's mind.

"Come, bear a hand, Arrowhead," said the Sergeant, who stood on the gunwale overlooking the movements of the two, which were proceeding too slowly for the impatience of a drowsy man; "it is getting late; and we soldiers have such a thing as reveille — early to bed and early to rise."

"Arrowhead is coming," was the answer, as the Tuscarora stepped towards the head of his canoe.

One blow of his keen knife severed the rope which held the boat, and then the cutter glanced ahead, leaving the light bubble of bark, which instantly lost its way, almost stationary. So suddenly and dexterously was this manoeuvre performed, that the canoe was on the lee quarter of the *Scud* before the Sergeant was aware of the artifice, and quite in her wake ere he had time to announce it to his companions.

"Hard-a-lee!" shouted Jasper, letting fly the jib-sheet with his own hands, when the cutter came swiftly up to the breeze, with all her canvas flapping, or was running into the wind's eye, as seamen term it, until the light craft was a hundred feet to windward of her former position. Quick and dexterous as was this movement, and ready as had been the expedient, it was not quicker or more ready than that of the Tuscarora. With an intelligence that denoted some familiarity with vessels, he had seized his paddle and was already skimming the water, aided by the efforts of his wife. The direction he took was south-westerly, or on a line that led him equally towards the wind and the shore, while it also kept him so far aloof from the cutter as to avoid the danger of the latter falling on board of him when she filled on the other tack. Swiftly as the *Scud* had shot into the wind, and far as she had forced ahead, Jasper knew it was necessary to cast her ere she had lost all her way; and it was not two minutes from the time the helm had been put down before the lively little craft was aback forward, and rapidly falling off, in order to allow her sails to fill on the opposite tack.

"He will escape!" said Jasper the instant he caught a glimpse of the relative bearings of the cutter and the canoe. "The cunning knave is paddling dead to windward, and the *Scud* can never overtake him!"

"You have a canoe!" exclaimed the Sergeant, manifesting the eagerness of a boy to join in the pursuit; "let us launch it, and give chase!"

"It will be useless. If Pathfinder had been on deck, there might have been a chance; but there is none now. To launch the canoe would have taken three or four minutes, and the time lost would be sufficient for the purposes of Arrowhead."

Both Cap and the Sergeant saw the truth of this, which would have been nearly self-evident even to one unaccustomed to vessels. The shore was distant less than half a mile, and the canoe was already glancing into its shadows, at a rate to show that it would reach the land before its pursuers could probably get half the distance. The helm of the *Scud* was reluctantly put up again, and the cutter wore short round on her heel, coming up to her course on the other tack, as if acting on an instinct. All this was done by Jasper in profound silence, his assistants understanding what was necessary, and lending their aid in a sort of mechanical imitation. While these manoeuvres were in the course of execution, Cap took the Sergeant by a button, and led him towards the cabin-door, where he was out of ear-shot, and began to unlock his stores of thought.

"Hark'e, brother Dunham," said he, with an ominous face, "this is a matter that requires mature thought and much circumspection."

"The life of a soldier, brother Cap, is one of constant thought and circumspection. On this frontier, were we to overlook either, our scalps might be taken from our heads in the first nap."

"But I consider this capture of Arrowhead as a circumstance; and I might add his escape as another. This Jasper Freshwater must look to it."

"They are both circumstances truly, brother; but they tell different ways. If it is a circumstance against the lad that the Indian has escaped, it is a circumstance in his favor that he was first taken."

"Ay, ay, but two circumstances do not contradict each other like two negatives. If you will follow the advice of an old seaman, Sergeant, not a moment is to be lost in taking the steps necessary for the security of the vessel and all on board of her. The cutter is now slipping through the water at the rate of six knots, and as the distances are so short on this bit of a pond, we may all find ourselves in a French port before morning, and in a French prison before night."

"This may be true enough. What would you advise me to do, brother?"

“In my opinion you should put this Master Freshwater under arrest on the spot; send him below under the charge of a sentinel, and transfer the command of the cutter to me. All this you have power to perform, the craft belonging to the army, and you being the commanding officer of the troops present.”

Sergeant Dunham deliberated more than an hour on the propriety of this proposal; for, though sufficiently prompt when his mind was really made up, he was habitually thoughtful and wary. The habit of superintending the personal police of the garrison had made him acquainted with character, and he had long been disposed to think well of Jasper. Still that subtle poison, suspicion, had entered his soul; and so much were the artifices and intrigues of the French dreaded, that, especially warned as he had been by his commander, it is not to be wondered that the recollection of years of good conduct should vanish under the influence of a distrust so keen, and seemingly so plausible. In this embarrassment the Sergeant consulted the Quartermaster, whose opinion, as his superior, he felt bound to respect, though at the moment independent of his control. It is an unfortunate occurrence for one who is in a dilemma to ask advice of another who is desirous of standing well in his favor, the party consulted being almost certain to try to think in the manner which will be the most agreeable to the party consulting. In the present instance it was equally unfortunate, as respects a candid consideration of the subject, that Cap, instead of the Sergeant himself, made the statement of the case; for the earnest old sailor was not backward in letting his listener perceive to which side he was desirous that the Quartermaster should lean. Lieutenant Muir was much too politic to offend the uncle and father of the woman he hoped and expected to win, had he really thought the case admitted of doubt; but, in the manner in which the facts were submitted to him, he was seriously inclined to think that it would be well to put the control of the *Scud* temporarily into the management of Cap, as a precaution against treachery. This opinion then decided the Sergeant, who forthwith set about the execution of the necessary measures.

Without entering into any explanations, Sergeant Dunham simply informed Jasper that he felt it to be his duty to deprive him temporarily of the command of the cutter, and to confer it on his own brother-in-law. A natural and involuntary burst of surprise, which escaped the young man, was met by a quiet remark, reminding him that military service was often of a nature that required concealment, and a declaration that the present duty was of such a character that this particular arrangement had become indispensable. Although Jasper's astonishment remained undiminished — the Sergeant cautiously abstaining from making any allusion to his suspicions — the young man was accustomed to obey with military submission; and he quietly acquiesced, with his own mouth directing the little crew to receive their further orders from Cap until another change should be effected. When, however, he was told the case required that not only he himself, but his principal assistant, who, on account of his long acquaintance with the lake, was usually termed the pilot, were to remain below, there was an alteration in his countenance and manner that denoted strong feeling, though it was so well mastered as to leave even the distrustful Cap in doubt as to its meaning. As a matter of course, however, when distrust exists, it was not long before the worst construction was put upon it.

As soon as Jasper and the pilot were below, the sentinel at the hatch received private orders to pay particular attention to both; to allow neither to come on deck again without giving instant notice to the person who might then be in charge of the cutter, and to insist on his return below as soon as possible. This precaution, however, was uncalled for; Jasper and his assistant both throwing themselves silently on their pallets, which neither quitted again that night.

“And now, Sergeant,” said Cap, as soon as he found himself master of the deck, “you will just have the goodness to give me the courses and distance, that I may see the boat keeps her head the right way.”

“I know nothing of either, brother Cap,” returned Dunham, not a little embarrassed at the question. “We must make the best of our way to the station among the Thousand Islands, ‘where we shall land, relieve the party that is already out, and get information for our future government.’ That’s it, nearly word for word, as it stands in the written orders.”

“But you can muster a chart — something in the way of bearings and distances, that I may see the road?”

“I do not think Jasper ever had anything of the sort to go by.”

“No chart, Sergeant Dunham!”

“Not a scrap of a pen even. Our sailors navigate this lake without any aid from maps.”

“The devil they do! They must be regular Yahoos. And do you suppose, Sergeant Dunham, that I can find one island out of a thousand without knowing its name or its position, without even a course or a distance?”

“As for the *name*, brother Cap, you need not be particular, for not one of the whole thousand *has* a name, and so a

mistake can never be made on that score. As for the position, never having been there myself, I can tell you nothing about it, nor do I think its position of any particular consequence, provided we find the spot. Perhaps one of the hands on deck can tell us the way."

"Hold on, Sergeant — hold on a moment, if you please, Sergeant Dunham. If I am to command this craft, it must be done, if you please, without holding any councils of war with the cook and cabin-boy. A ship-master is a ship-master, and he must have an opinion of his own, even if it be a wrong one. I suppose you know service well enough to understand that it is better in a commander to go wrong than to go nowhere. At all events, the Lord High Admiral couldn't command a yawl with dignity, if he consulted the cockswain every time he wished to go ashore. No sir, if I sink, I sink! but, d — me, I'll go down ship-shape and with dignity."

"But, brother Cap, I have no wish to go down anywhere, unless it be to the station among the Thousand Islands whither we are bound."

"Well, well, Sergeant, rather than ask advice — that is, direct, barefaced advice — of a foremast hand, or any other than a quarter-deck officer, I would go round to the whole thousand, and examine them one by one until we got the right haven. But there is such a thing as coming at an opinion without manifesting ignorance, and I will manage to rouse all there is out of these hands, and make them think all the while that I am cramming them with my own experience! We are sometimes obliged to use the glass at sea when there is nothing in sight, or to heave the lead long before we strike soundings. When a youngster, sailed two v'y'ges with a man who navigated his ship pretty much by the latter sort of information, which sometimes answers."

"I know we are steering in the right direction at present," returned the Sergeant; "but in the course of a few hours we shall be up with a headland, where we must feel our way with more caution."

"Leave me to pump the man at the wheel, brother, and you shall see that I will make him suck in a very few minutes."

Cap and the Sergeant now walked aft, until they stood by the sailor who was at the helm, Cap maintaining an air of security and tranquillity, like one who was entirely confident of his own powers.

"This is a wholesome air, my lad," Cap observed, in the manner that a superior on board a vessel sometimes condescends to use to a favored inferior. "Of course you have it in this fashion off the land every night?"

"At this season of the year, sir," the man returned, touching his hat, out of respect, to his new commander and Sergeant Dunham's connection.

"The same thing, I take it, among the Thousand Islands? The wind will stand, of course, though we shall then have land on every side of us."

"When we get farther east, sir, the wind will probably shift, for there can then be no particular land-breeze."

"Ay, ay; so much for your fresh water! It has always some trick that is opposed to nature. Now, down among the West India Islands, one is just as certain of having a land-breeze as he is of having a sea-breeze. In that respect there is no difference, though it's quite in rule it should be different up here on this bit of fresh water. Of course, my lad, you know all about these said Thousand Islands?"

"Lord bless you, Master Cap, nobody knows all about them or anything about them. They are a puzzle to the oldest sailor on the lake, and we don't pretend to know even their names. For that matter, most of them have no more names than a child that dies before it is christened."

"Are you a Roman Catholic?" demanded the Sergeant sharply.

"No, sir, nor anything else. I'm a generalizer about religion, never troubling that which don't trouble me."

"Hum! a generalizer; that is, no doubt, one of the new sects that afflict the country," muttered Mr. Dunham, whose grandfather had been a New Jersey Quaker, his father a Presbyterian, and who had joined the Church of England himself after he entered the army.

"I take it, John —" resumed Cap. "Your name is Jack, I believe?"

"No, sir; I am called Robert."

"Ay, Robert, it's very much the same thing, Jack or Bob; we use the two indifferently. I say, Bob, it's good holding ground, is it, down at this same station for which we are bound?"

"Bless you, sir! I know no more about it than one of the Mohawks, or a soldier of the 55th."

"Did you never anchor there?"

"Never, sir. Master Eau-douce always makes fast to the shore."

"But in running in for the town, you kept the lead going, out of question, and must have tallowed as usual."

"Tallow! — and town, too! Bless your heart, Master Cap! there is no more town than there is on your chin, and not half as much tallow!"

The Sergeant smiled grimly, but his brother-in-law did not detect this proof of humor.

"No church tower, nor light, nor fort, ha? There is a garrison, as you call it hereaway, at least?"

"Ask Sergeant Dunham, sir, if you wish to know that. All the garrison is on board the *Scud*."

"But in running in, Bob, which of the channels do you think the best? the one you went last, or — or — or — ay, or the other?"

"I can't say, sir; I know nothing of either."

"You didn't go to sleep, fellow, at the wheel, did you?"

"Not at the wheel, sir, but down in the fore-peak in my berth. Eau-douce sent us below, soldiers and all, with the exception of the pilot, and we know no more of the road than if we had never been over it. This he has always done in going in and coming out; and, for the life of me, I could tell you nothing of the channel, or the course, after we are once fairly up with the islands. No one knows anything of either but Jasper and the pilot."

"Here is a circumstance for you, Sergeant," said Cap, leading his brother-in-law a little aside; "there is no one on board to pump, for they all suck from ignorance at the first stroke of the brake. How the devil am I to find the way to this station for which we are bound?"

"Sure enough, brother Cap, your question is more easily put than answered. Is there no such thing as figuring it out by navigation? I thought you salt-water mariners were able to do as small a thing as that. I have often read of their discovering islands, surely."

"That you have, brother, that you have; and this discovery would be the greatest of them all; for it would not only be discovering one island, but one island out of a thousand."

"Still, the sailors of the lake have a method of finding the places they wish to go to."

"If I have understood you, Sergeant, this station or blockhouse is particularly private."

"It is, indeed, the utmost care having been taken to prevent a knowledge of its position from reaching the enemy."

"And you expect me, a stranger on your lake, to find this place without chart, course, distance, latitude, longitude, or soundings — ay, d — me, or tallow! Allow me to ask if you think a mariner runs by his nose, like one of Pathfinder's hounds?"

"Well, brother, you may yet learn something by questioning the young man at the helm; I can hardly think that he is as ignorant as he pretends to be."

"Hum! — this looks like another circumstance. For that matter, the case is getting to be so full of circumstances that one hardly knows how to foot up the evidence. But we will soon see how much the lad knows."

Cap and the Sergeant now returned to their station near the helm, and the former renewed his inquiries.

"Do you happen to know what may be the latitude and longitude of this said island, my lad?" he asked.

"The what, sir?"

"Why, the latitude or longitude — one or both; I'm not particular which, as I merely inquire in order to see how they bring up young men on this bit of fresh water."

"I'm not particular about either myself, sir, and so I do not happen to know what you mean."

"Not what I mean! You know what latitude is?"

"Not I, sir!" returned the man, hesitating. "Though I believe it is French for the upper lakes."

"Whe-e-e-w-!" whistled Cap, drawing out his breath like the broken stop of an organ; "latitude, French for upper lakes! Hark'e, young man, do you know what longitude means?"

"I believe I do, sir; that is, five feet six, the regulation height for soldiers in the king's service."

"There's the longitude found out for you, Sergeant, in the rattling of a brace-block! You have some notion about a

degree, and minutes and seconds, I hope?"

"Yes, sir; degree means my betters; and minutes and seconds are for the short or long log-lines. We all know these things as well as the salt-water people."

"D—me, brother Dunham, if I think even Faith can get along on this lake, much as they say it can do with mountains. Well, my lad, you understand the azimuth, and measuring distances, and how to box the compass."

"As for the first, sir, I can't say I do. The distances we all know, as we measure them from point to point; and as for boxing the compass, I will turn my back to no admiral in his Majesty's fleet. Nothe, nothe and by east, nothe, nothe-east, nothe-east and by nothe, nothe-east, nothe-east and by east, east-nothe-east, east and by nothe-east —"

"That will do, that will do. You'll bring about a shift of wind if you go on in this manner. I see very plainly, Sergeant," walking away again, and dropping his voice, "we've nothing to hope for from that chap. I'll stand on two hours longer on this tack, when we'll heave-to and get the soundings, after which we will be governed by circumstances."

To this the Sergeant made no objections; and as the wind grew lighter, as usual with the advance of night, and there were no immediate obstacles to the navigation, he made a bed of a sail on deck, and was soon lost in the sound sleep of a soldier. Cap continued to walk the deck, for he was one whose iron frame set fatigue at defiance, and not once that night did he close his eyes.

It was broad daylight when Sergeant Dunham awoke, and the exclamation of surprise that escaped him, as he rose to his feet and began to look about him, was stronger than it was usual for one so drilled to suffer to be heard. He found the weather entirely changed, the view bounded by driving mist that limited the visible horizon to a circle of about a mile in diameter, the lake raging and covered with foam, and the *Scud* lying-to. A brief conversation with his brother-in-law let him into the secrets of all these sudden changes.

According to the account of Master Cap, the wind had died away to a calm about midnight, or just as he was thinking of heaving-to, to sound, for islands ahead were beginning to be seen. At one A.M. it began to blow from the north-east, accompanied by a drizzle, and he stood off to the northward and westward, knowing that the coast of New York lay in the opposite direction. At half-past one he stowed the flying-jib, reefed the mainsail, and took the bonnet off the jib. At two he was compelled to get a second reef aft; and by half-past two he had put a balance-reef in the sail, and was lying-to.

"I can't say but the boat behaves well, Sergeant," the old sailor added, "but it blows forty-two pounders. I had no idea there were any such currents of air up here on this bit of fresh water, though I care not the knotting of a yarn for it, as your lake has now somewhat of a natural look; and if this d — d water had a savor of salt about it, one might be comfortable."

"How long have you been heading in this direction, brother Cap?" inquired the prudent soldier; "and at what rate may we be going through the water?"

"Why, two or three hours, mayhap, and she went like a horse for the first pair of them. Oh, we've a fine offing now! for, to own the truth, little relishing the neighborhood of them said islands, although they are to windward, I took the helm myself, and run her off free for some league or two. We are well to leeward of them, I'll engage — I say to leeward; for though one might wish to be well to windward of one island, or even half a dozen, when it comes to a thousand, the better way is to give it up at once, and to slide down under their lee as fast as possible. No, no; there they are up yonder in the dingle; and there they may stay, for anything Charles Cap cares."

"As the north shore lies only some five or six leagues from us, brother, and I know there is a large bay in that quarter, might it not be well to consult some of the crew concerning our position, if, indeed, we do not call up Jasper Eau-douce, and tell him to carry us back to Oswego? For it is quite impossible we should ever reach the station with this wind directly in our teeth."

"There are several serious professional reasons, Sergeant, against all your propositions. In the first place, an admission of ignorance on the part of a commander would destroy discipline. No matter, brother; I understand your shake of the head, but nothing capsizes discipline so much as to confess ignorance. I once knew a master of a vessel who went a week on a wrong course rather than allow he had made a mistake; and it was surprising how much he rose in the opinions of his people, just because they could not understand him."

"That may do on salt water, brother Cap, but it will hardly do on fresh. Rather than wreck my command on the Canada shore, I shall feel it a duty to take Jasper out of arrest."

"And make a haven in Frontenac. No, Sergeant; the *Scud* is in good hands, and will now learn something of

seamanship. We have a fine offing, and no one but a madman would think of going upon a coast in a gale like this. I shall ware every watch, and then we shall be safe against all dangers but those of the drift, which, in a light low craft like this, without top-hamper, will be next to nothing. Leave it all to me, Sergeant, and I pledge you the character of Charles Cap that all will go well.”

Sergeant Dunham was fain to yield. He had great confidence in his connection’s professional skill, and hoped that he would take such care of the cutter as would amply justify his opinion of him. On the other hand, as distrust, like care, grows by what it feeds on, he entertained so much apprehension of treachery, that he was quite willing any one but Jasper should just then have the control of the fate of the whole party. Truth, moreover, compels us to admit another motive. The particular duty on which he was now sent of right should have been confided to a commissioned officer; and Major Duncan had excited a good deal of discontent among the subalterns of the garrison, by having confided it to one of the Sergeant’s humble station. To return without having even reached the point of destination, therefore, the latter felt would be a failure from which he was not likely soon to recover, and the measure would at once be the means of placing a superior in his shoes.





## CHAPTER 16.

*Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form  
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,  
Calm or convulsed — in breeze, or gale, or storm,  
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime  
Dark-heaving; — boundless, endless, and sublime —  
The image of eternity; the throne  
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime  
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone  
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.*

—BYRON.

As the day advanced, that portion of the inmates of the vessel which had the liberty of doing so appeared on deck. As yet the sea was not very high, from which it was inferred that the cutter was still under the lee of the islands; but it was apparent to all who understood the lake that they were about to experience one of the heavy autumnal gales of that region. Land was nowhere visible; and the horizon on every side exhibited that gloomy void, which lends to all views on vast bodies of water the sublimity of mystery. The swells, or, as landsmen term them, the waves, were short and curling, breaking of necessity sooner than the longer seas of the ocean; while the element itself, instead of presenting that beautiful hue which rivals the deep tint of the southern sky, looked green and angry, though wanting in the lustre that is derived from the rays of the sun.

The soldiers were soon satisfied with the prospect, and one by one they disappeared, until none were left on deck but the crew, the Sergeant, Cap, Pathfinder, the Quartermaster, and Mabel. There was a shade on the brow of the last, who had been made acquainted with the real state of things, and who had fruitlessly ventured an appeal in favor of Jasper's restoration to the command. A night's rest and a night's reflection appeared also to have confirmed the Pathfinder in his opinion of the young man's innocence; and he, too, had made a warm appeal on behalf of his friend, though with the same want of success.

Several hours passed away, the wind gradually getting heavier and the sea rising, until the motion of the cutter compelled Mabel and the Quartermaster to retreat also. Cap wore several times; and it was now evident that the *Scud* was drifting into the broader and deeper parts of the lake, the seas raging down upon her in a way that none but a vessel of superior mould and build could have long ridden and withstood. All this, however, gave Cap no uneasiness; but, like the hunter that pricks his ears at the sound of the horn, or the war-horse that paws and snorts with pleasure at the roll of the drum, the whole scene awakened all that was man within him; and instead of the captious, supercilious, and dogmatic critic, quarrelling with trifles and exaggerating immaterial things, he began to exhibit the qualities of the hardy and experienced seaman which he truly was. The hands soon imbibed a respect for his skill; and, though they wondered at the disappearance of their old commander and the pilot, for which no reason had been publicly given, they soon yielded an implicit and cheerful obedience to the new one.

"This bit of fresh water, after all, brother Dunham, has some spirit, I find," cried Cap about noon, rubbing his hands in pure satisfaction at finding himself once more wrestling with the elements. "The wind seems to be an honest old-fashioned gale, and the seas have a fanciful resemblance to those of the Gulf Stream. I like this, Sergeant, I like this, and shall get to respect your lake, if it hold out twenty-four hours longer in the fashion in which it has begun."

"Land, ho!" shouted the man who was stationed on the forecastle.

Cap hurried forward; and there, sure enough, the land was visible through the drizzle, at the distance of about half a mile, the cutter heading directly towards it. The first impulse of the old seaman was to give an order to "stand by, to ware off shore;" but the cool-headed soldier restrained him.

"By going a little nearer," said the Sergeant, "some of us may recognize the place. Most of us know the American shore in this part of the lake; and it will be something gained to learn our position."

"Very true, very true; if, indeed, there is any chance of that we will hold on. What is this off here, a little on our weather-bow? It looks like a low headland."

"The garrison, by Jove!" exclaimed the other, whose trained eye sooner recognized the military outlines than the less

instructed senses of his connection.

The Sergeant was not mistaken. There was the fort, sure enough, though it looked dim and indistinct through the fine rain, as if it were seen in the dusk of evening or the haze of morning. The low, sodded, and verdant ramparts, the sombre palisades, now darker than ever with water, the roof of a house or two, the tall, solitary flagstaff, with its halyards blown steadily out into a curve that appeared traced in immovable lines in the air, were all soon to be seen though no sign of animated life could be discovered. Even the sentinel was housed; and at first it was believed that no eye would detect the presence of their own vessel. But the unceasing vigilance of a border garrison did not slumber: one of the look-outs probably made the interesting discovery; a man or two were seen on some elevated stands, and then the entire ramparts next the lake were dotted with human beings.

The whole scene was one in which sublimity was singularly relieved by the picturesque. The raging of the tempest had a character of duration that rendered it easy to imagine it might be a permanent feature of the spot. The roar of the wind was without intermission, and the raging water answered to its dull but grand strains with hissing spray, a menacing wash, and sullen surges. The drizzle made a medium for the eye which closely resembled that of a thin mist, softening and rendering mysterious the images it revealed, while the genial feeling that is apt to accompany a gale of wind on water contributed to aid the milder influences of the moment. The dark interminable forest hove up out of the obscurity, grand, sombre, and impressive, while the solitary, peculiar, and picturesque glimpses of life that were caught in and about the fort, formed a refuge for the eye to retreat to when oppressed with the more imposing objects of nature.

"They see us," said the Sergeant, "and think we have returned on account of the gale, and have fallen to leeward of the port. Yes, there is Major Duncan himself on the north-eastern bastion; I know him by his height, and by the officers around him."

"Sergeant, it would be worth standing a little jeering, if we could fetch into the river, and come safely to an anchor. In that case, too, we might land this Master Eau-douce, and purify the boat."

"It would indeed; but, as poor a sailor as I am, I well know it cannot be done. Nothing that sails the lake can turn to windward against this gale; and there is no anchorage outside in weather like this."

"I know it, I see it, Sergeant; and pleasant as is that sight to you landsmen, we must leave it. For myself, I am never so happy in heavy weather as when I am certain that the land is behind me."

The *Scud* had now forged so near in, that it became indispensable to lay her head off shore again, and the necessary orders were given. The storm-staysail was set forward, the gaff lowered, the helm put up, and the light craft, that seemed to sport with the elements like a duck, fell off a little, drew ahead swiftly, obeyed her rudder, and was soon flying away on the top of the surges, dead before the gale. While making this rapid flight, though the land still remained in view on her larboard beam, the fort and the groups of anxious spectators on its rampart were swallowed up in the mist. Then followed the evolutions necessary to bring the head of the cutter up to the wind, when she again began to wallow her weary way towards the north shore.

Hours now passed before any further change was made, the wind increasing in force, until even the dogmatical Cap fairly admitted it was blowing a thorough gale of wind. About sunset the *Scud* wore again to keep her off the north shore during the hours of darkness; and at midnight her temporary master, who, by questioning the crew in an indirect manner, had obtained some general knowledge of the size and shape of the lake, believed himself to be about midway between the two shores. The height and length of the seas aided this impression; and it must be added that Cap by this time began to feel a respect for fresh water which twenty-four hours earlier he would have derided as impossible. Just as the night turned, the fury of the wind became so great that he found it impossible to bear up against it, the water falling on the deck of the little craft in such masses as to cause it to shake to the centre, and, though a vessel of singularly lively qualities, to threaten to bury it beneath its weight. The people of the *Scud* averred that never before had they been out in such a tempest, which was true; for, possessing a perfect knowledge of all the rivers and headlands and havens, Jasper would have carried the cutter in shore long ere this, and placed her in safety in some secure anchorage. But Cap still disdained to consult the young master, who continued below, determining to act like a mariner of the broad ocean.

It was one in the morning when the storm-staysail was again got on the *Scud*, the head of the mainsail lowered, and the cutter put before the wind. Although the canvas now exposed was merely a rag in surface, the little craft nobly justified the use of the name she bore. For eight hours did she scud in truth; and it was almost with the velocity of the gulls that

wheeled wildly over her in the tempest, apparently afraid to alight in the boiling caldron of the lake. The dawn of day brought little change; for no other horizon became visible than the little circle of drizzling sky and water already described, in which it seemed as if the elements were rioting in a sort of chaotic confusion. During this time the crew and passengers of the cutter were of necessity passive. Jasper and the pilot remained below; but, the motion of the vessel having become easier, nearly all the rest were on deck. The morning meal had been taken in silence, and eye met eye, as if their owners asked each other, in dumb show, what was to be the end of this strife in the elements. Cap, however, was perfectly composed, and his face brightened, his step grew firmer, and his whole air more assured, as the storm increased, making larger demands on his professional skill and personal spirit. He stood on the forecastle, his arms crossed, balancing his body with a seaman's instinct, while his eyes watched the caps of the seas, as they broke and glanced past the reeling cutter, itself in such swift motion, as if they were the scud flying athwart the sky. At this sublime instant one of the hands gave the unexpected cry of "A sail!"

There was so much of the wild and solitary character of the wilderness about Ontario, that one scarcely expected to meet with a vessel on its waters. The *Scud* herself, to those who were in her, resembled a man threading the forest alone, and the meeting was like that of two solitary hunters beneath the broad canopy of leaves that then covered so many millions of acres on the continent of America. The peculiar state of the weather served to increase the romantic, almost supernatural appearance of the passage. Cap alone regarded it with practised eyes, and even he felt his iron nerves thrill under the sensations that were awakened by the wild features of the scene.

The strange vessel was about two cables' length ahead of the *Scud*, standing by the wind athwart her bows, and steering a course to render it probable that the latter would pass within a few yards of her. She was a full-rigged ship; and, seen through the misty medium of the tempest, the most experienced eye could detect no imperfection in her gear or construction. The only canvas she had set was a close-reefed main-topsail, and two small storm-staysails, one forward and the other aft. Still the power of the wind pressed so hard upon her as to bear her down nearly to her beam-ends, whenever the hull was not righted by the buoyancy of some wave under her lee. Her spars were all in their places, and by her motion through the water, which might have equalled four knots in the hour, it was apparent that she steered a little free.

"The fellow must know his position well," said Cap, as the cutter flew down towards the ship with a velocity almost equalling that of the gale, "for he is standing boldly to the southward, where he expects to find anchorage or a haven. No man in his senses would run off free in that fashion, that was not driven to scudding, like ourselves, who did not perfectly understand where he was going."

"We have made an awful run, captain," returned the man to whom this remark had been addressed. "That is the French king's ship, Lee-my-calm (*Le Montcalm*), and she is standing in for the Niagara, where her owner has a garrison and a port. We've made an awful run of it!"

"Ay, bad luck to him! Frenchman-like, he skulks into port the moment he sees an English bottom."

"It might be well for us if we could follow him," returned the man, shaking his head despondingly, "for we are getting into the end of a bay up here at the head of the lake, and it is uncertain whether we ever get out of it again!"

"Pooh, man, pooh! We have plenty of sea room, and a good English hull beneath us. We are no Johnny Crapeaus to hide ourselves behind a point or a fort on account of a puff of wind. Mind your helm, sir!"

The order was given on account of the menacing appearance of the approaching passage. The *Scud* was now heading directly for the fore-foot of the Frenchman; and, the distance between the two vessels having diminished to a hundred yards, it was momentarily questionable if there was room to pass.

"Port, sir, port," shouted Cap. "Port your helm and pass astern!"

The crew of the Frenchman were seen assembling to windward, and a few muskets were pointed, as if to order the people of the *Scud* to keep off. Gesticulations were observed, but the sea was too wild and menacing to admit of the ordinary expedients of war. The water was dripping from the muzzles of two or three light guns on board the ship, but no one thought of loosening them for service in such a tempest. Her black sides, as they emerged from a wave, glistened and seemed to frown; but the wind howled through her rigging, whistling the thousand notes of a ship; and the hails and cries that escape a Frenchman with so much readiness were inaudible.

"Let him halloo himself hoarse!" growled Cap. "This is no weather to whisper secrets in. Port, sir, port!"

The man at the helm obeyed, and the next send of the sea drove the *Scud* down upon the quarter of the ship, so near

her that the old mariner himself recoiled a step, in a vague expectation that, at the next surge ahead, she would drive bows foremost directly into the planks of the other vessel. But this was not to be: rising from the crouching posture she had taken, like a panther about to leap, the cutter dashed onward, and at the next instant she was glancing past the stern of her enemy, just clearing the end of her spanker-boom with her own lower yard.

The young Frenchman who commanded the *Montcalm* leaped on the taffrail; and, with that high-toned courtesy which relieves even the worst acts of his countrymen, he raised his cap and smiled a salutation as the *Scud* shot past. There were *bonhomie* and good taste in this act of courtesy, when circumstances allowed of no other communications; but they were lost on Cap, who, with an instinct quite as true to his race, shook his fist menacingly, and muttered to himself —

“Ay, ay, it’s d — d lucky for you I’ve no armament on board here, or I’d send you in to get new cabin-windows fitted. Sergeant, he’s a humbug.”

“’Twas civil, brother Cap,” returned the other, lowering his hand from the military salute which his pride as a soldier had induced him to return — “’twas civil, and that’s as much as you can expect from a Frenchman. What he really meant by it no one can say.”

“He is not heading up to this sea without an object, neither. Well, let him run in, if he can get there, we will keep the lake, like hearty English mariners.”

This sounded gloriously, but Cap eyed with envy the glittering black mass of the *Montcalm*’s hull, her waving topsail, and the misty tracery of her spars, as she grew less and less distinct, and finally disappeared in the drizzle, in a form as shadowy as that of some unreal image. Gladly would he have followed in her wake had he dared; for, to own the truth, the prospect of another stormy night in the midst of the wild waters that were raging around him brought little consolation. Still he had too much professional pride to betray his uneasiness, and those under his care relied on his knowledge and resources, with the implicit and blind confidence that the ignorant are apt to feel.

A few hours succeeded, and darkness came again to increase the perils of the *Scud*. A lull in the gale, however, had induced Cap to come by the wind once more, and throughout the night the cutter was lying-to as before, head-reaching as a matter of course, and occasionally wearing to keep off the land. It is unnecessary to dwell on the incidents of this night, which resembled those of any other gale of wind. There were the pitching of the vessel, the hissing of the waters, the dashing of spray, the shocks that menaced annihilation to the little craft as she plunged into the seas, the undying howl of the wind, and the fearful drift. The last was the most serious danger; for, though exceedingly weatherly under her canvas, and totally without top-hamper, the *Scud* was so light, that the combing of the swells would seem at times to wash her down to leeward with a velocity as great as that of the surges themselves.

During this night Cap slept soundly, and for several hours. The day was just dawning when he felt himself shaken by the shoulder; and arousing himself, he found the Pathfinder standing at his side. During the gale the guide had appeared little on deck, for his natural modesty told him that seamen alone should interfere with the management of the vessel; and he was willing to show the same reliance on those who had charge of the *Scud*, as he expected those who followed through the forest to manifest in his own skill; but he now thought himself justified in interfering, which he did in his own unsophisticated and peculiar manner.

“Sleep is sweet, Master Cap,” said he, as soon as the eyes of the latter were fairly open, and his consciousness had sufficiently returned — “sleep is sweet, as I know from experience, but life is sweeter still. Look about you, and say if this is exactly the moment for a commander to be off his feet.”

“How now? how now, Master Pathfinder?” growled Cap, in the first moments of his awakened faculties. “Are you, too, getting on the side of the grumblers? When ashore I admired your sagacity in running through the worst shoals without a compass; and since we have been afloat, your meekness and submission have been as pleasant as your confidence on your own ground. I little expected such a summons from you.”

“As for myself, Master Cap, I feel I have my gifts, and I believe they’ll interfere with those of no other man; but the case may be different with Mabel Dunham. She has her gifts, too, it is true; but they are not rude like ours, but gentle and womanish, as they ought to be. It’s on her account that I speak, and not on my own.”

“Ay, ay, I begin to understand. The girl is a good girl, my worthy friend; but she is a soldier’s daughter and a sailor’s niece, and ought not to be too tame or too tender in a gale. Does she show any fear?”

“Not she! not she! Mabel is a woman, but she is reasonable and silent. Not a word have I heard from her concerning

our doings; though I do think, Master Cap, she would like it better if Jasper Eau-douce were put into his proper place, and things were restored to their old situation, like. This is human natur'."

"I'll warrant it — girl-like, and Dunham-like, too. Anything is better than an old uncle, and everybody knows more than an old seaman. *This* is human natur', Master Pathfinder, and d — me if I'm the man to sheer a fathom, starboard or port, for all the human natur' that can be found in a minx of twenty — ay, or" (lowering his voice a little) "for all that can be paraded in his Majesty's 55th regiment of foot. I've not been at sea forty years, to come up on this bit of fresh water to be taught human natur'. How this gale holds out! It blows as hard at this moment as if Boreas had just clapped his hand upon the bellows. And what is all this to leeward?" (rubbing his eyes)—"land! as sure as my name is Cap — and high land, too."

The Pathfinder made no immediate answer; but, shaking his head, he watched the expression of his companion's face, with a look of strong anxiety in his own.

"Land, as certain as this is the *Scud!*" repeated Cap; "a lee shore, and that, too, within a league of us, with as pretty a line of breakers as one could find on the beach of all Long Island!"

"And is that encouraging? or is it disheartening?" inquired the Pathfinder.

"Ha! encouraging — disheartening! — why, neither. No, no, there is nothing encouraging about it; and as for disheartening, nothing ought to dishearten a seaman. You never get disheartened or afraid in the woods, my friend?"

"I'll not say that, I'll not say that. When the danger is great, it is my gift to see it, and know it, and to try to avoid it; else would my scalp long since have been drying in a Mingo wigwam. On this lake, however, I can see no trail, and I feel it my duty to submit; though I think we ought to remember there is such a person as Mabel Dunham on board. But here comes her father, and he will naturally feel for his own child."

"We are seriously situated, I believe, brother Cap," said the Sergeant, when he had reached the spot, "by what I can gather from the two hands on the forecastle? They tell me the cutter cannot carry any more sail, and her drift is so great we shall go ashore in an hour or two. I hope their fears have deceived them?"

Cap made no reply; but he gazed at the land with a rueful face, and then looked to windward with an expression of ferocity, as if he would gladly have quarrelled with the weather.

"It may be well, brother," the Sergeant continued, "to send for Jasper and consult him as to what is to be done. There are no French here to dread; and, under all circumstances, the boy will save us from drowning if possible."

"Ay, ay, 'tis these cursed circumstances that have done all the mischief. But let the fellow come; let him come; a few well-managed questions will bring the truth out of him, I'll warrant you."

This acquiescence on the part of the dogmatical Cap was no sooner obtained, than Jasper was sent for. The young man instantly made his appearance, his whole air, countenance, and mien expressive of mortification, humility, and, as his observers fancied, rebuked deception. When he first stepped on deck, Jasper cast one hurried, anxious glance around, as if curious to know the situation of the cutter; and that glance sufficed, it would seem, to let him into the secret of all her perils. At first he looked to windward, as is usual with every seaman; then he turned round the horizon, until his eye caught a view of the high lands to leeward, when the whole truth burst upon him at once.

"I've sent for you, Master Jasper," said Cap, folding his arms, and balancing his body with the dignity of the forecastle, "in order to learn something about the haven to leeward. We take it for granted you do not bear malice so hard as to wish to drown us all, especially the women; and I suppose you will be man enough to help us run the cutter into some safe berth until this bit of a gale has done blowing!"

"I would die myself rather than harm should come to Mabel Dunham," the young man earnestly answered.

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried the Pathfinder, clapping his hand kindly on Jasper's shoulder. "The lad is as true as the best compass that ever ran a boundary, or brought a man off from a blind trail. It is a mortal sin to believe otherwise."

"Humph!" ejaculated Cap; "especially the women! As if *they* were in any particular danger. Never mind, young man; we shall understand each other by talking like two plain seamen. Do you know of any port under our lee?"

"None. There is a large bay at this end of the lake; but it is unknown to us all, and not easy of entrance."

"And this coast to leeward — it has nothing particular to recommend it, I suppose?"

"It is a wilderness until you reach the mouth of the Niagara in one direction, and Frontenac in the other. North and west, they tell me, there is nothing but forest and prairies for a thousand miles."

“Thank God! then, there can be no French. Are there many savages, hereaway, on the land?”

“The Indians are to be found in all directions; though they are nowhere very numerous. By accident, we might find a party at any point on the shore; or we might pass months there without seeing one.”

“We must take our chance, then, as to the blackguards; but, to be frank with you, Master Western, if this little unpleasant matter about the French had not come to pass, what would you now do with the cutter?”

“I am a much younger sailor than yourself, Master Cap,” said Jasper modestly, “and am hardly fitted to advise you.”

“Ay, ay, we all know that. In a common case, perhaps not. But this is an uncommon case, and a circumstance; and on this bit of fresh water it has what may be called its peculiarities; and so, everything considered, you may be fitted to advise even your own father. At all events, you can speak, and I can judge of your opinions, agreeably to my own experience.”

“I think, sir, before two hours are over, the cutter will have to anchor.”

“Anchor! — not out here in the lake?”

“No, sir; but in yonder, near the land.”

“You do not mean to say, Master Eau-douce, you would anchor on a lee shore in a gale of wind?”

“If I would save my vessel, that is exactly what I would do, Master Cap.”

“Whe-e-e-w! — this is fresh water, with a vengeance! Hark’e, young man, I’ve been a seafaring animal, boy and man, forty-one years, and I never yet heard of such a thing. I’d throw my ground-tackle overboard before I would be guilty of so lubberly an act!”

“That is what we do on this lake,” modestly replied Jasper, “when we are hard pressed. I daresay we might do better, had we been better taught.”

“That you might, indeed! No; no man induces me to commit such a sin against my own bringing up. I should never dare show my face inside of Sandy Hook again, had I committed so know-nothing an exploit. Why, Pathfinder, here, has more seamanship in him than that comes to. You can go below again, Master Eau-douce.”

Jasper quietly bowed and withdrew; still, as he passed down the ladder, the spectators observed that he cast a lingering anxious look at the horizon to windward and the land to leeward, and then disappeared with concern strongly expressed in every lineament of his face.



## CHAPTER 17.

*His still refuted quirks he still repeats;  
New-raised objections with new quibbles meets,  
Till sinking in the quicksand he defends,  
He dies disputing, and the contest ends.*

—COWPER.

As the soldier's wife was sick in her berth, Mabel Dunham was the only person in the outer cabin when Jasper returned to it; for, by an act of grace in the Sergeant, he had been permitted to resume his proper place in this part of the vessel. We should be ascribing too much simplicity of character to our heroine, if we said that she had felt no distrust of the young man in consequence of his arrest; but we should also be doing injustice to her warmth of feeling and generosity of disposition, if we did not add, that this distrust was insignificant and transient. As he now took his seat near her, his whole countenance clouded with the uneasiness he felt concerning the situation of the cutter, everything like suspicion was banished from her mind, and she saw in him only an injured man.

"You let this affair weigh too heavily on your mind, Jasper," said she eagerly, or with that forgetfulness of self with which the youthful of her sex are wont to betray their feelings when a strong and generous interest has attained the ascendancy; "no one who knows you can, or does, believe you guilty. Pathfinder says he will pledge his life for you."

"Then you, Mabel," returned the youth, his eyes flashing fire, "do not look upon me as the traitor your father seems to believe me to be?"

"My dear father is a soldier, and is obliged to act as one. My father's daughter is not, and will think of you as she ought to think of a man who has done so much to serve her already."

"Mabel, I'm not used to talking with one like you, or saying all I think and feel with any. I never had a sister, and my mother died when I was a child, so that I know little what your sex most likes to hear —"

Mabel would have given the world to know what lay behind the teeming word at which Jasper hesitated; but the indefinable and controlling sense of womanly diffidence made her suppress her curiosity. She waited in silence for him to explain his own meaning.

"I wish to say, Mabel," the young man continued, after a pause which he found sufficiently embarrassing, "that I am unused to the ways and opinions of one like you, and that you must imagine all I would add."

Mabel had imagination enough to fancy anything, but there are ideas and feelings that her sex prefer to have expressed before they yield them all their own sympathies, and she had a vague consciousness that these of Jasper might properly be enumerated in the class. With a readiness that belonged to her sex, therefore, she preferred changing the discourse to permitting it to proceed any further in a manner so awkward and so unsatisfactory.

"Tell me one thing, Jasper, and I shall be content," said she, speaking now with a firmness which denoted confidence, not only in herself, but in her companion: "you do not deserve this cruel suspicion which rests upon you?"

"I do not, Mabel!" answered Jasper, looking into her full blue eyes with an openness and simplicity that might have shaken stronger distrust. "As I hope for mercy hereafter, I do not!"

"I knew it — I could have sworn it!" returned the girl warmly. "And yet my father means well; — but do not let this matter disturb you, Jasper."

"There is so much more to apprehend from another quarter just now, that I scarcely think of it."

"Jasper!"

"I do not wish to alarm you, Mabel; but if your uncle could be persuaded to change his notions about handling the *Scud*: and yet he is so much more experienced than I am, that he ought, perhaps, to place more reliance on his own judgment than on mine."

"Do you think the cutter in any danger?" demanded Mabel, quick as thought.

"I fear so; at least she would have been thought in great danger by us of the lake; perhaps an old seaman of the ocean may have means of his own to take care of her."

"Jasper, all agree in giving you credit for skill in managing the *Scud*. You know the lake, you know the cutter; you *must*

be the best judge of our real situation."

"My concern for you, Mabel, may make me more cowardly than common; but, to be frank, I see but one method of keeping the cutter from being wrecked in the course of the next two or three hours, and that your uncle refuses to take. After all, this may be my ignorance; for, as he says, Ontario is merely fresh water."

"You cannot believe this will make any difference. Think of my dear father, Jasper! Think of yourself; of all the lives that depend on a timely word from you to save them."

"I think of you, Mabel, and that is more, much more, than all the rest put together!" returned the young man, with a strength of expression and an earnestness of look that uttered infinitely more than the words themselves.

Mabel's heart beat quickly, and a gleam of grateful satisfaction shot across her blushing features; but the alarm was too vivid and too serious to admit of much relief from happier thoughts. She did not attempt to repress a look of gratitude, and then she returned to the feeling which was naturally uppermost.

"My uncle's obstinacy must not be permitted to occasion this disaster. Go once more on deck, Jasper; and ask my father to come into the cabin."

While the young man was complying with this request, Mabel sat listening to the howling of the storm and the dashing of the water against the cutter, in a dread to which she had hitherto been a stranger. Constitutionally an excellent sailor, as the term is used among passengers, she had not hitherto bethought her of any danger, and had passed her time since the commencement of the gale in such womanly employments as her situation allowed; but now that alarm was seriously awakened, she did not fail to perceive that never before had she been on the water in such a tempest. The minute or two which elapsed before the Sergeant came appeared an hour, and she scarcely breathed when she saw him and Jasper descending the ladder in company. Quick as language could express her meaning, she acquainted her father with Jasper's opinion of their situation; and entreated him, if he loved her, or had any regard for his own life, or for those of his men, to interfere with her uncle, and to induce him to yield the control of the cutter again to its proper commander.

"Jasper is true, father," added she earnestly; "and if false, he could have no motive in wrecking us in this distant part of the lake at the risk of all our lives, his own included. I will pledge my own life for his truth."

"Ay, this is well enough for a young woman who is frightened," answered the more phlegmatic parent; "but it might not be so excusable in one in command of an expedition. Jasper may think the chance of drowning in getting ashore fully repaid by the chance of escaping as soon as he reaches the land."

"Sergeant Dunham!"

"Father!"

These exclamations were made simultaneously, but they were uttered in tones expressive of different feelings. In Jasper, surprise was the emotion uppermost; in Mabel reproach. The old soldier, however, was too much accustomed to deal frankly with subordinates to heed either; and after a moment's thought, he continued as if neither had spoken. "Nor is brother Cap a man likely to submit to be taught his duty on board a vessel."

"But, father, when all our lives are in the utmost jeopardy!"

"So much the worse. The fair-weather commander is no great matter; it is when things go wrong that the best officer shows himself in his true colors. Charles Cap will not be likely to quit the helm because the ship is in danger. Besides, Jasper Eau-douce, he says your proposal in itself has a suspicious air about it, and sounds more like treachery than reason."

"He may think so; but let him send for the pilot and hear his opinion. It is well known that I have not seen the man since yesterday evening."

"This does sound reasonably, and the experiment shall be tried. Follow me on deck then, that all may be honest and above-board."

Jasper obeyed, and so keen was the interest of Mabel, that she too ventured as far as the companion-way, where her garments were sufficiently protected against the violence of the wind and her person from the spray. Here maiden modesty induced her to remain, though an absorbed witness of what was passing.

The pilot soon appeared, and there was no mistaking the look of concern that he cast around at the scene as soon as he was in the open air. Some rumors of the situation of the *Scud* had found their way below, it is true; but in this instance



rumor had lessened instead of magnifying the danger. He was allowed a few minutes to look about him, and then the question was put as to the course which he thought it prudent to follow.

"I see no means of saving the cutter but to anchor," he answered simply, and without hesitation.

"What! out here in the lake?" inquired Cap, as he had previously done of Jasper.

"No: but closer in; just at the outer line of the breakers."

The effect of this communication was to leave no doubt in the mind of Cap that there was a secret arrangement between her commander and the pilot to cast away the *Scud*; most probably with the hope of effecting their escape. He consequently treated the opinion of the latter with the indifference he had manifested towards that of the former.

"I tell you, brother Dunham," said he, in answer to the remonstrances of the Sergeant against his turning a deaf ear to this double representation, "that no seaman would give such an opinion honestly. To anchor on a lee shore in a gale of wind would be an act of madness that I could never excuse to the underwriters, under any circumstances, so long as a rag can be set; but to anchor close to breakers would be insanity."

"His Majesty underwrites the *Scud*, brother, and I am responsible for the lives of my command. These men are better acquainted with Lake Ontario than we can possibly be, and I do think their telling the same tale entitles them to some credit."

"Uncle!" said Mabel earnestly; but a gesture from Jasper induced the girl to restrain her feelings.

"We are drifting down upon the breakers so rapidly," said the young man, "that little need be said on the subject. Half an hour must settle the matter, one way or the other; but I warn Master Cap that the surest-footed man among us will not be able to keep his feet an instant on the deck of this low craft, should she fairly get within them. Indeed I make little doubt that we shall fill and founder before the second line of rollers is passed."

"And how would anchoring help the matter?" demanded Cap furiously, as if he felt that Jasper was responsible for the effects of the gale, as well as for the opinion he had just given.

"It would at least do no harm," Eau-douce mildly replied. "By bringing the cutter head to sea we should lessen her drift; and even if we dragged through the breakers, it would be with the least possible danger. I hope, Master Cap, you will allow the pilot and myself to *prepare* for anchoring, since the precaution may do good, and can do no harm."

"Overhaul your ranges, if you will, and get your anchors clear, with all my heart. We are now in a situation that cannot be much affected by anything of that sort. Sergeant, a word with you aft here, if you please."

Cap led his brother-in-law out of ear-shot; and then, with more of human feeling in his voice and manner than he was apt to exhibit, he opened his heart on the subject of their real situation.

"This is a melancholy affair for poor Mabel," said he, blowing his nose, and speaking with a slight tremor. "You and I, Sergeant, are old fellows, and used to being near death, if not to actually dying; our trades fit us for such scenes; but poor Mabel! — she is an affectionate and kind-hearted girl, and I had hoped to see her comfortably settled, and a mother, before my time came. Well, well! we must take the bad with the good in every v'y'ge; and the only serious objection that an old seafaring man can with propriety make to such an event is, that it should happen on this bit of d — d fresh water."

Sergeant Dunham was a brave man, and had shown his spirit in scenes that looked much more appalling than this; but on all such occasions he had been able to act his part against his foes, while here he was pressed upon by an enemy whom he had no means of resisting. For himself he cared far less than for his daughter, feeling some of that self-reliance which seldom deserts a man of firmness who is in vigorous health, and who has been accustomed to personal exertions in moments of jeopardy; but as respects Mabel he saw no means of escape, and, with a father's fondness, he at once determined that, if either was doomed to perish, he and his daughter must perish together.

"Do you think this must come to pass?" he asked of Cap firmly, but with strong feeling.

"Twenty minutes will carry us into the breakers; and look for yourself, Sergeant: what chance will even the stoutest man among us have in that caldron to leeward?"

The prospect was, indeed, little calculated to encourage hope. By this time the *Scud* was within a mile of the shore, on which the gale was blowing at right angles, with a violence that forbade the idea of showing any additional canvas with a view to claw off. The small portion of the mainsail actually set, and which merely served to keep the head of the *Scud* so near the wind as to prevent the waves from breaking over her, quivered under the gusts, as if at each moment the stout

threads which held the complicated fabric together were about to be torn asunder. The drizzle had ceased; but the air, for a hundred feet above the surface of the lake, was filled with dazzling spray, which had an appearance not unlike that of a brilliant mist, while above all the sun was shining gloriously in a cloudless sky. Jasper had noted the omen, and had foretold that it announced a speedy termination to the gale, though the next hour or two must decide their fate. Between the cutter and the shore the view was still more wild and appalling. The breakers extended nearly half a mile; while the water within their line was white with foam, the air above them was so far filled with vapor and spray as to render the land beyond hazy and indistinct. Still it could be seen that the latter was high — not a usual thing for the shores of Ontario — and that it was covered with the verdant mantle of the interminable forest.

While the Sergeant and Cap were gazing at this scene in silence, Jasper and his people were actively engaged on the forecastle. No sooner had the young man received permission to resume his old employment, than, appealing to some of the soldiers for aid, he mustered five or six assistants, and set about in earnest the performance of a duty which had been too long delayed. On these narrow waters anchors are never stowed in-board, or cables that are intended for service unbent, and Jasper was saved much of the labor that would have been necessary in a vessel at sea. The two bowers were soon ready to be let go, ranges of the cables were overhauled, and then the party paused to look about them. No changes for the better had occurred, but the cutter was falling slowly in, and each instant rendered it more certain that she could not gain an inch to windward.

One long, earnest survey of the lake ended, Jasper gave new orders in a similar manner to prove how much he thought that the time pressed. Two kedges were got on deck, and hawsers were bent to them; the inner ends of the hawsers were bent, in their turns, to the crowns of the anchors, and everything was got ready to throw them overboard at the proper moment. These preparations completed, Jasper's manner changed from the excitement of exertion to a look of calm but settled concern. He quitted the forecastle, where the seas were dashing inboard at every plunge of the vessel, the duty just mentioned having been executed with the bodies of the crew frequently buried in the water, and walked to a drier part of the deck, aft. Here he was met by the Pathfinder, who was standing near Mabel and the Quartermaster. Most of those on board, with the exception of the individuals who have already been particularly mentioned, were below, some seeking relief from physical suffering on their pallets, and others tardily bethinking them of their sins. For the first time, most probably, since her keel had dipped into the limpid waters of Ontario, the voice of prayer was, heard on board the *Scud*.

"Jasper," commenced his friend, the guide, "I have been of no use this morning, for my gifts are of little account, as you know, in a vessel like this; but, should it please God to let the Sergeant's daughter reach the shore alive, my acquaintance with the forest may still carry her through in safety to the garrison."

"'Tis a fearful distance thither, Pathfinder!" Mabel rejoined, the party being so near together that all which was said by one was overheard by the others. "I am afraid none of us could live to reach the fort."

"It would be a risky path, Mabel, and a crooked one; though some of your sex have undergone even more than that in this wilderness. But, Jasper, either you or I, or both of us, must man this bark canoe; Mabel's only chance will lie in getting through the breakers in that."

"I would willingly man anything to save Mabel," answered Jasper, with a melancholy smile; "but no human hand, Pathfinder, could carry that canoe through yonder breakers in a gale like this. I have hopes from anchoring, after all; for once before have we saved the *Scud* in an extremity nearly as great as this."

"If we are to anchor, Jasper," the Sergeant inquired, "why not do it at once? Every foot we lose in drifting now would come into the distance we shall probably drag when the anchors are let go."

Jasper drew nearer to the Sergeant, and took his hand, pressing it earnestly, and in a way to denote strong, almost uncontrollable feelings.

"Sergeant Dunham," said he solemnly, "you are a good man, though you have treated me harshly in this business. You love your daughter?"

"That you cannot doubt, Eau-douce," returned the Sergeant huskily.

"Will you give her — give us all — the only chance for life that is left?"

"What would you have me do, boy, what would you have me do? I have acted according to my judgment hitherto — what would you have me do?"

"Support me against Master Cap for five minutes, and all that man can do towards saving the *Scud* shall be done."

The Sergeant hesitated, for he was too much of a disciplinarian to fly in the face of regular orders. He disliked the appearance of vacillation, too; and then he had a profound respect for his kinsman's seamanship. While he was deliberating, Cap came from the post he had some time occupied, which was at the side of the man at the helm, and drew nigh the group.

"Master Eau-douce," said he, as soon as near enough to be heard, "I have come to inquire if you know any spot near by where this cutter can be beached? The moment has arrived when we are driven to this hard alternative."

That instant of indecision on the part of Cap secured the triumph of Jasper. Looking at the Sergeant, the young man received a nod that assured him of all he asked, and he lost not one of those moments that were getting to be so very precious.

"Shall I take the helm," he inquired of Cap, "and see if we can reach a creek that lies to leeward?"

"Do so, do so," said the other, hemming to clear his throat; for he felt oppressed by a responsibility that weighed all the heavier on his shoulders on account of his ignorance. "Do so, Eau-douce, since, to be frank with you, I can see nothing better to be done. We must beach or swamp."

Jasper required no more; springing aft, he soon had the tiller in his own hands. The pilot was prepared for what was to follow; and, at a sign from his young commander, the rag of sail that had so long been set was taken in. At that moment, Jasper, watching his time, put the helm up; the head of a staysail was loosened forward, and the light cutter, as if conscious she was now under the control of familiar hands, fell off, and was soon in the trough of the sea. This perilous instant was passed in safety, and at the next moment the little vessel appeared flying down toward the breakers at a rate that threatened instant destruction. The distances had become so short, that five or six minutes sufficed for all that Jasper wished, and he put the helm down again, when the bows of the *Scud* came up to the wind, notwithstanding the turbulence of the waters, as gracefully as the duck varies its line of direction on the glassy pond. A sign from Jasper set all in motion on the forecastle, and a kedge was thrown from each bow. The fearful nature of the drift was now apparent even to Mabel's eyes, for the two hawsers ran out like tow-lines. As soon as they straightened to a slight strain, both anchors were let go, and cable was given to each, nearly to the better-ends. It was not a difficult task to snub so light a craft with ground-tackle of a quality better than common; and in less than ten minutes from the moment when Jasper went to the helm, the *Scud* was riding, head to sea, with the two cables stretched ahead in lines that resembled bars of iron.

"This is not well done, Master Jasper!" angrily exclaimed Cap, as soon as he perceived the trick which had been played him; "this is not well done, sir. I order you to cut, and to beach the cutter without a moment's delay."

No one, however, seemed disposed to comply with this order; for so long as Eau-douce saw fit to command, his own people were disposed to obey. Finding that the men remained passive, Cap, who believed they were in the utmost peril, turned fiercely to Jasper, and renewed his remonstrances.

"You did not head for your pretended creek," added he, after dealing in some objurgatory remarks that we do not deem it necessary to record, "but steered for that bluff, where every soul on board would have been drowned, had we gone ashore."

"And you wish to cut, and put every soul ashore at that very spot!" Jasper retorted, a little drily.

"Throw a lead-line overboard, and ascertain the drift!" Cap now roared to the people forward. A sign from Jasper sustaining this order, it was instantly obeyed. All on deck watched, with nearly breathless interest, the result of the experiment. The lead was no sooner on the bottom, than the line tended forward, and in about two minutes it was seen that the cutter had drifted her length dead in towards the bluff. Jasper looked gravely, for he well knew nothing would hold the vessel did she get within the vortex of the breakers, the first line of which was appearing and disappearing about a cable's length directly under their stern.

"Traitor!" exclaimed Cap, shaking a finger at the young commander, though passion choked the rest. "You must answer for this with your life!" he added after a short pause. "If I were at the head of this expedition, Sergeant, I would hang him at the end of the main-boom, lest he escape drowning."

"Moderate your feelings, brother; be more moderate, I beseech you; Jasper appears to have done all for the best, and matters may not be so bad as you believe them."

"Why did he not run for the creek he mentioned? — why has he brought us here, dead to windward of that bluff, and to a spot where even the breakers are only of half the ordinary width, as if in a hurry to drown all on board?"

"I headed for the bluff, for the precise reason that the breakers are so narrow at this spot," answered Jasper mildly, though his gorge had risen at the language the other held.

"Do you mean to tell an old seaman like me that this cutter could live in those breakers?"

"I do not, sir. I think she would fill and swamp if driven into the first line of them; I am certain she would never reach the shore on her bottom, if fairly entered. I hope to keep her clear of them altogether."

"With a drift of her length in a minute?"

"The backing of the anchors does not yet fairly tell, nor do I even hope that *they* will entirely bring her up."

"On what, then, do you rely? To moor a craft, head and stern, by faith, hope, and charity?"

"No, sir, I trust to the under-tow. I headed for the bluff because I knew that it was stronger at that point than at any other, and because we could get nearer in with the land without entering the breakers."

This was said with spirit, though without any particular show of resentment. Its effect on Cap was marked, the feeling that was uppermost being evidently that of surprise.

"Under-tow!" he repeated; "who the devil ever heard of saving a vessel from going ashore by the under-tow?"

"This may never happen on the ocean, sir," Jasper answered modestly; "but we have known it to happen here."

"The lad is right, brother," put in the Sergeant; "for, though I do not well understand it, I have often heard the sailors of the lake speak of such a thing. We shall do well to trust to Jasper in this strait."

Cap grumbled and swore; but, as there was no remedy, he was compelled to acquiesce. Jasper, being now called on to explain what he meant by the under-tow, gave this account of the matter. The water that was driven up on the shore by the gale was necessarily compelled to find its level by returning to the lake by some secret channels. This could not be done on the surface, where both wind and waves were constantly urging it towards the land, and it necessarily formed a sort of lower eddy, by means of which it flowed back again to its ancient and proper bed. This inferior current had received the name of the under-tow, and, as it would necessarily act on the bottom of a vessel which drew as much water as the *Scud*, Jasper trusted to the aid of this reaction to keep his cables from parting. In short, the upper and lower currents would, in a manner, counteract each other.

Simple and ingenious as was this theory, however, as yet there was little evidence of its being reduced to practice. The drift continued; though, as the kedges and hawsers with which the anchors were backed took the strains, it became sensibly less. At length the man at the lead announced the joyful intelligence that the anchors had ceased to drag, and that the vessel had brought up! At this precise moment the first line of breakers was about a hundred feet astern of the *Scud*, even appearing to approach much nearer as the foam vanished and returned on the raging surges. Jasper sprang forward, and, casting a glance over the bows, he smiled in triumph, as he pointed exultingly to the cables. Instead of resembling bars of iron in rigidity, as before, they were curving downwards, and to a seaman's senses it was evident that the cutter rose and fell on the seas as they came in with the ease of a ship in a tides-way, when the power of the wind is relieved by the counteracting pressure of the water.

"Tis the under-tow!" he exclaimed with delight, fairly bounding along the deck to steady the helm, in order that the cutter might ride still easier. "Providence has placed us directly in its current, and there is no longer any danger."

"Ay, ay, Providence is a good seaman," growled Cap, "and often helps lubbers out of difficulty. Under-tow or upper-tow, the gale has abated; and, fortunately for us all, the anchors have met with good holding-ground. Then this d — d fresh water has an unnatural way with it."

Men are seldom inclined to quarrel with good fortune, but it is in distress that they grow clamorous and critical. Most on board were disposed to believe that they had been saved from shipwreck by the skill and knowledge of Jasper, without regarding the opinions of Cap, whose remarks were now little heeded.

There was half an hour of uncertainty and doubt, it is true, during which period the lead was anxiously watched; and then a feeling of security came over all, and the weary slept without dreaming of instant death.



## CHAPTER 18.

*It is to be all made of sighs and tears;  
It is to be all made of faith and service;  
It is to be all made of phantasy;  
All made of passion, and all made of wishes;  
All adoration, duty, and observance;  
All humbleness, all patience, and impatience;  
All purity, all trial, all observance.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

It was near noon when the gale broke; and then its force abated as suddenly as its violence had arisen. In less than two hours after the wind fell, the surface of the lake, though still agitated, was no longer glittering with foam; and in double that time, the entire sheet presented the ordinary scene of disturbed water, that was unbroken by the violence of a tempest. Still the waves came rolling incessantly towards the shore, and the lines of breakers remained, though the spray had ceased to fly; the combing of the swells was more moderate, and all that there was of violence proceeded from the impulsion of wind which had abated.

As it was impossible to make head against the sea that was still up, with the light opposing air that blew from the eastward, all thoughts of getting under way that afternoon were abandoned. Jasper, who had now quietly resumed the command of the *Scud*, busied himself, however, in heaving-up the anchors, which were lifted in succession; the kedges that backed them were weighed, and everything was got in readiness for a prompt departure, as soon as the state of the weather would allow. In the meantime, they who had no concern with these duties sought such means of amusement as their peculiar circumstances allowed.

As is common with those who are unused to the confinement of a vessel, Mabel cast wistful eyes towards the shore; nor was it long before she expressed a wish that it were possible to land. The Pathfinder was near her at the time, and he assured her that nothing would be easier, as they had a bark canoe on deck, which was the best possible mode of conveyance to go through a surf. After the usual doubts and misgivings, the Sergeant was appealed to; his opinion proved to be favorable, and preparations to carry the whim into effect were immediately made.

The party which was to land consisted of Sergeant Dunham, his daughter, and the Pathfinder. Accustomed to the canoe, Mabel took her seat in the centre with great steadiness, her father was placed in the bows, while the guide assumed the office of conductor, by steering in the stern. There was little need of impelling the canoe by means of the paddle, for the rollers sent it forward at moments with a violence that set every effort to govern its movements at defiance. More than once, before the shore was reached, Mabel repented of her temerity, but Pathfinder encouraged her, and really manifested so much self-possession, coolness, and strength of arm himself, that even a female might have hesitated about owning all her apprehensions. Our heroine was no coward; and while she felt the novelty of her situation, in landing through a surf, she also experienced a fair proportion of its wild delight. At moments, indeed, her heart was in her mouth, as the bubble of a boat floated on the very crest of a foaming breaker, appearing to skim the water like a swallow, and then she flushed and laughed, as, left by the glancing element, they appeared to linger behind as if ashamed of having been outdone in the headlong race. A few minutes sufficed for this excitement; for though the distance between the cutter and the land considerably exceeded a quarter of a mile, the intermediate space was passed in a very few minutes.

On landing, the Sergeant kissed his daughter kindly, for he was so much of a soldier as always to feel more at home on *terra firma* than when afloat; and, taking his gun, he announced his intention to pass an hour in quest of game.

“Pathfinder will remain near you, girl, and no doubt he will tell you some of the traditions of this part of the world, or some of his own experiences with the Mingos.”

The guide laughed, promised to have a care of Mabel, and in a few minutes the father had ascended a steep acclivity and disappeared in the forest. The others took another direction, which, after a few minutes of a sharp ascent also, brought them to a small naked point on the promontory, where the eye overlooked an extensive and very peculiar panorama. Here Mabel seated herself on a fragment of fallen rock to recover her breath and strength, while her companion, on whose sinews no personal exertion seemed to make any impression, stood at her side, leaning in his own and not ungraceful manner on his long rifle. Several minutes passed, and neither spoke; Mabel, in particular, being lost in admiration of the

view.

The position the two had obtained was sufficiently elevated to command a wide reach of the lake, which stretched away towards the north-east in a boundless sheet, glittering beneath the rays of an afternoon's sun, and yet betraying the remains of that agitation which it had endured while tossed by the late tempest. The land set bounds to its limits in a huge crescent, disappearing in distance towards the south-east and the north. Far as the eye could reach, nothing but forest was visible, not even a solitary sign of civilization breaking in upon the uniform and grand magnificence of nature. The gale had driven the *Scud* beyond the line of those forts with which the French were then endeavoring to gird the English North American possessions; for, following the channels of communication between the great lakes, their posts were on the banks of the Niagara, while our adventurers had reached a point many leagues westward of that celebrated strait. The cutter rode at single anchor, without the breakers, resembling some well-imagined and accurately-executed toy, intended rather for a glass case than for struggles with the elements which she had so lately gone through, while the canoe lay on the narrow beach, just out of reach of the waves that came booming upon the land, a speck upon the shingles.

"We are very far here from human habitations!" exclaimed Mabel, when, after a long survey of the scene, its principal peculiarities forced themselves on her active and ever brilliant imagination; "this is indeed being on a frontier."

"Have they more sightly scenes than this nearer the sea and around their large towns?" demanded Pathfinder, with an interest he was apt to discover in such a subject.

"I will not say that: there is more to remind one of his fellow-beings there than here; less, perhaps, to remind one of God."

"Ay, Mabel, that is what my own feelings say. I am but a poor hunter, I know, untaught and unlarned; but God is as near me, in this my home, as he is near the king in his royal palace."

"Who can doubt it?" returned Mabel, looking from the view up into the hard-featured but honest face of her companion, though not without surprise at the energy of his manner. "One feels nearer to God in such a spot, I think, than when the mind is distracted by the objects of the towns."

"You say all I wish to say myself, Mabel, but in so much plainer speech, that you make me ashamed of wishing to let others know what I feel on such matters. I have coasted this lake in search of skins afore the war, and have been here already; not at this very spot, for we landed yonder, where you may see the blasted oak that stands above the cluster of hemlocks —"

"How, Pathfinder, can you remember all these trifles so accurately?"

"These are our streets and houses, our churches and palaces. Remember them, indeed! I once made an appointment with the Big Sarpent, to meet at twelve o'clock at noon, near the foot of a certain pine, at the end of six months, when neither of us was within three hundred miles of the spot. The tree stood, and stands still, unless the judgment of Providence has lighted on that too, in the midst of the forest, fifty miles from any settlement, but in a most extraordinary neighborhood for beaver."

"And did you meet at that very spot and hour?"

"Does the sun rise and set? When I reached the tree, I found the Sarpent leaning against its trunk with torn leggings and muddied moecassins. The Delaware had got into a swamp, and it worried him not a little to find his way out of it; but as the sun which comes over the eastern hills in the morning goes down behind the western at night, so was he true to time and place. No fear of Chingachgook when there is either a friend or an enemy in the case. He is equally sartain with each."

"And where is the Delaware now? why is he not with us to-day?"

"He is scouting on the Mingo trail, where I ought to have been too, but for a great human infirmity."

"You seem above, beyond, superior to all infirmity, Pathfinder; I never yet met with a man who appeared to be so little liable to the weaknesses of nature."

"If you mean in the way of health and strength, Mabel, Providence has been kind to me; though I fancy the open air, long hunts, active scoutings, forest fare, and the sleep of a good conscience, may always keep the doctors at a distance. But I am human after all; yes, I find I'm very human in some of my feelings."

Mabel looked surprised, and it would be no more than delineating the character of her sex, if we added that her sweet countenance expressed a good deal of curiosity, too, though her tongue was more discreet.

"There is something bewitching in this wild life of yours, Pathfinder," she exclaimed, a tinge of enthusiasm mantling her cheeks. "I find I'm fast getting to be a frontier girl, and am coming to love all this grand silence of the woods. The towns seem tame to me; and, as my father will probably pass the remainder of his days here, where he has already lived so long, I begin to feel that I should be happy to continue with him, and not to return to the seashore."

"The woods are never silent, Mabel, to such as understand their meaning. Days at a time have I travelled them alone, without feeling the want of company; and, as for conversation, for such as can comprehend their language, there is no want of rational and instructive discourse."

"I believe you are happier when alone, Pathfinder, than when mingling with your fellow-creatures."

"I will not say that, I will not say exactly that. I have seen the time when I have thought that God was sufficient for me in the forest, and that I have craved no more than His bounty and His care. But other feelings have got uppermost, and I suppose nature will have its way. All other creature's mate, Mabel, and it was intended man should do so too."

"And have you never bethought you of seeking a wife, Pathfinder, to share your fortunes?" inquired the girl, with the directness and simplicity that the pure of heart and the undesigning are the most apt to manifest, and with that feeling of affection which is inbred in her sex. "To me it seems you only want a home to return to from your wanderings to render your life completely happy. Were I a man, it would be my delight to roam through these forests at will, or to sail over this beautiful lake."

"I understand you, Mabel; and God bless you for thinking of the welfare of men as humble as we are. We have our pleasures, it is true, as well as our gifts, but we might be happier; yes, I do think we might be happier."

"Happier! in what way, Pathfinder? In this pure air, with these cool and shaded forests to wander through, this lovely lake to gaze at and sail upon, with clear consciences, and abundance for all their real wants, men ought to be nothing less than as perfectly happy as their infirmities will allow."

"Every creature has its gifts, Mabel, and men have theirs," answered the guide, looking stealthily at his beautiful companion, whose cheeks had flushed and eyes brightened under the ardor of feelings excited by the novelty of her striking situation; "and all must obey them. Do you see yonder pigeon that is just alighting on the beach — here in a line with the fallen chestnut?"

"Certainly; it is the only thing stirring with life in it, besides ourselves, that is to be seen in this vast solitude."

"Not so, Mabel, not so; Providence makes nothing that lives to live quite alone. Here is its mate, just rising on the wing; it has been feeding near the other beach, but it will not long be separated from its companion."

"I understand you, Pathfinder," returned Mabel, smiling sweetly, though as calmly as if the discourse was with her father. "But a hunter may find a mate, even in this wild region. The Indian girls are affectionate and true, I know; for such was the wife of Arrowhead, to a husband who oftener frowned than smiled."

"That would never do, Mabel, and good would never come of it. Kind must cling to kind, and country to country, if one would find happiness. If, indeed, I could meet with one like you, who would consent to be a hunter's wife, and who would not scorn my ignorance and rudeness, then, indeed, would all the toil of the past appear like the sporting of the young deer, and all the future like sunshine."

"One like me! A girl of my years and indiscretion would hardly make a fit companion for the boldest scout and surest hunter on the lines."

"Ah, Mabel! I fear me that I have been improving a red-skin's gifts with a pale-face's nature? Such a character would insure a wife in an Indian village."

"Surely, surely, Pathfinder, you would not think of choosing one so ignorant, so frivolous, so vain, and so inexperienced as I for your wife?" Mabel would have added, "and as young;" but an instinctive feeling of delicacy repressed the words.

"And why not, Mabel? If you are ignorant of frontier usages, you know more than all of us of pleasant anecdotes and town customs: as for frivolous, I know not what it means; but if it signifies beauty, ah's me! I fear it is no fault in my eyes. Vain you are not, as is seen by the kind manner in which you listen to all my idle tales about scoutings and trails; and as for experience, that will come with years. Besides, Mabel, I fear men think little of these matters when they are about to take wives: I do."

"Pathfinder, your words — your looks:— surely all this is meant in trifling; you speak in pleasantry?"

"To me it is always agreeable to be near you, Mabel; and I should sleep sounder this blessed night than I have done for a week past, could I think that you find such discourse as pleasant as I do."

We shall not say that Mabel Dunham had not believed herself a favorite with the guide. This her quick feminine sagacity had early discovered; and perhaps she had occasionally thought there had mingled with his regard and friendship some of that manly tenderness which the ruder sex must be coarse, indeed, not to show on occasions to the gentler; but the idea that he seriously sought her for his wife had never before crossed the mind of the spirited and ingenuous girl. Now, however, a gleam of something like the truth broke in upon her imagination, less induced by the words of her companion, perhaps, than by his manner. Looking earnestly into the rugged, honest countenance of the scout, Mabel's own features became concerned and grave; and when she spoke again, it was with a gentleness of manner that attracted him to her even more powerfully than the words themselves were calculated to repel.

"You and I should understand each other, Pathfinder," said she with an earnest sincerity; "nor should there be any cloud between us. You are too upright and frank to meet with anything but sincerity and frankness in return. Surely, surely, all this means nothing — has no other connection with your feelings than such a friendship as one of your wisdom and character would naturally feel for a girl like me?"

"I believe it's all nat'ral, Mabel, yes; I do: the Sergeant tells me he had such feelings towards your own mother, and I think I've seen something like it in the young people I have from time to time guided through the wilderness. Yes, yes, I daresay it's all nat'ral enough, and that makes it come so easy, and is a great comfort to me."

"Pathfinder, your words make me uneasy. Speak plainer, or change the subject for ever. You do not, cannot mean that — you cannot wish me to understand" — even the tongue of the spirited Mabel faltered, and she shrank, with maiden shame, from adding what she wished so earnestly to say. Rallying her courage, however, and determined to know all as soon and as plainly as possible, after a moment's hesitation, she continued — "I mean, Pathfinder, that you do not wish me to understand that you seriously think of me as a wife?"

"I do, Mabel; that's it, that's just it; and you have put the matter in a much better point of view than I with my forest gifts and frontier ways would ever be able to do. The Sergeant and I have concluded on the matter, if it is agreeable to you, as he thinks is likely to be the case; though I doubt my own power to please one who deserves the best husband America can produce."

Mabel's countenance changed from uneasiness to surprise; and then, by a transition still quicker, from surprise to pain.

"My father!" she exclaimed — "my dear father has thought of my becoming your wife, Pathfinder?"

"Yes, he has, Mabel, he has, indeed. He has even thought such a thing might be agreeable to you, and has almost encouraged me to fancy it might be true."

"But you yourself — you certainly can care nothing whether this singular expectation shall ever be realized or not?"

"Anan?"

"I mean, Pathfinder, that you have talked of this match more to oblige my father than anything else; that your feelings are no way concerned, let my answer be what it may?"

The scout looked earnestly into the beautiful face of Mabel, which had flushed with the ardor and novelty of her sensations, and it was not possible to mistake the intense admiration that betrayed itself in every lineament of his ingenuous countenance.

"I have often thought myself happy, Mabel, when ranging the woods on a successful hunt, breathing the pure air of the hills, and filled with vigor and health; but I now know that it has all been idleness and vanity compared with the delight it would give me to know that you thought better of me than you think of most others."

"Better of you! — I do, indeed, think better of you, Pathfinder, than of most others: I am not certain that I do not think better of you than of any other; for your truth, honesty, simplicity, justice, and courage are scarcely equalled by any of earth."

"Ah, Mabel, these are sweet and encouraging words from you! and the Sergeant, after all, was not so near wrong as I feared."



“Nay, Pathfinder, in the name of all that is sacred and just, do not let us misunderstand each other in a matter of so much importance. While I esteem, respect, nay, reverence you, almost as much as I reverence my own dear father, it is impossible that I should ever become your wife — that I—”

The change in her companion’s countenance was so sudden and so great, that the moment the effect of what she had uttered became visible in the face of the Pathfinder, Mabel arrested her own words, notwithstanding her strong desire to be explicit, the reluctance with which she could at any time cause pain being sufficient of itself to induce the pause. Neither spoke for some time, the shade of disappointment that crossed the rugged lineaments of the hunter amounting so nearly to anguish as to frighten his companion, while the sensation of choking became so strong in the Pathfinder that he fairly gripped his throat, like one who sought physical relief for physical suffering. The convulsive manner in which his fingers worked actually struck the alarmed girl with a feeling of awe.

“Nay, Pathfinder,” Mabel eagerly added, the instant she could command her voice — “I may have said more than I mean; for all things of this nature are possible, and women, they say, are never sure of their own minds. What I wish you to understand is, that it is not likely that you and I should ever think of each other as man and wife ought to think of each other.”

“I do not — I shall never think in that way again, Mabel,” gasped forth the Pathfinder, who appeared to utter his words like one just raised above the pressure of some suffocating substance. “No, no, I shall never think of you, or any one else, again in that way.”

“Pathfinder, dear Pathfinder, understand me; do not attach more meaning to my words than I do myself: a match like that would be unwise, unnatural, perhaps.”

“Yes, unnat’ral — ag’in natur’; and so I told the Sergeant, but he *would* have it otherwise.”

“Pathfinder! oh, this is worse than I could have imagined! Take my hand, excellent Pathfinder, and let me see that you do not hate me. For God’s sake, smile upon me again.”

“Hate you, Mabel! Smile upon you! Ah’s me!”

“Nay, give me your hand; your hardy, true, and manly hand — both, both, Pathfinder! for I shall not be easy until I feel certain that we are friends again, and that all this has been a mistake.”

“Mabel!” said the guide, looking wistfully into the face of the generous and impetuous girl, as she held his two hard and sunburnt hands in her own pretty and delicate fingers, and laughing in his own silent and peculiar manner, while anguish gleamed over lineaments which seemed incapable of deception, even while agitated with emotions so conflicting — “Mabel! the Sergeant was wrong.”

The pent-up feelings could endure no more, and the tears rolled down the cheeks of the scout like rain. His fingers again worked convulsively at his throat; and his breast heaved, as if it possessed a tenant of which it would be rid, by any effort, however desperate.

“Pathfinder! Pathfinder!” Mabel almost shrieked; “anything but this, anything but this! Speak to me, Pathfinder! Smile again, say one kind word, anything to prove you can forgive me.”

“The Sergeant was wrong!” exclaimed the guide, laughing amid his agony, in a way to terrify his companion by the unnatural mixture of anguish and light-heartedness. “I knew it, I knew it, and said it; yes, the Sergeant was wrong after all.”

“We can be friends, though we cannot be man and wife,” continued Mabel, almost as much disturbed as her companion, scarcely knowing what she said; “we can always be friends, and always will.”

“I thought the Sergeant was mistaken,” resumed the Pathfinder, when a great effort had enabled him to command himself, “for I did not think my gifts were such as would please the fancy of a town-bred girl. It would have been better, Mabel, had he not over-persuaded me into a different notion; and it might have been better, too, had you not been so pleasant and confiding like; yes, it would.”

“If I thought any error of mine had raised false expectations in you, Pathfinder, however unintentionally on my part, I should never forgive myself; for, believe me, I would rather endure pain in my own feelings than you should suffer.”

“That’s just it, Mabel, that’s just it. These speeches and opinions, spoken in so soft a voice, and in a way I’m so unused to in the woods, have done the mischief. But I now see plainly, and begin to understand the difference between us better,

and will strive to keep down thought, and to go abroad again as I used to do, looking for the game and the inimy. Ah's me, Mabel! I have indeed been on a false trail since we met."

"In a little while you will forget all this, and think of me as a friend, who owes you her life."

"This may be the way in the towns, but I doubt if it's nat'ral to the woods. With us, when the eye sees a lovely sight, it is apt to keep it long in view, or when the mind takes in an upright and proper feeling, it is loath to part with it."

"You will forget it all, when you come seriously to recollect that I am altogether unsuited to be your wife."

"So I told the Sergeant; but he would have it otherwise. I knew you was too young and beautiful for one of middle age, like myself, and who never was comely to look at even in youth; and then your ways have not been my ways; nor would a hunter's cabin be a fitting place for one who was edicated among chiefs, as it were. If I were younger and comelier though, like Jasper Eau-douce —"

"Never mind Jasper Eau-douce," interrupted Mabel impatiently; "we can talk of something else."

"Jasper is a worthy lad, Mabel; ay, and a comely," returned the guileless guide, looking earnestly at the girl, as if he distrusted her judgment in speaking slightly of his friend. "Were I only half as comely as Jasper Western, my misgivings in this affair would not have been so great, and they might not have been so true."

"We will not talk of Jasper Western," repeated Mabel, the color mounting to her temples; "he may be good enough in a gale, or on the lake, but he is not good enough to talk of here."

"I fear me, Mabel, he is better than the man who is likely to be your husband, though the Sergeant says that never can take place. But the Sergeant was wrong once, and he may be wrong twice."

"And who is likely to be my husband, Pathfinder! This is scarcely less strange than what has just passed between us."

"I know it is nat'ral for like to seek like, and for them that have consorted much with officers' ladies to wish to be officers' ladies themselves. But, Mabel; I may speak plainly to you, I know; and I hope my words will not give you pain; for, now I understand what it is to be disappointed in such feelings, I wouldn't wish to cause even a Mingo sorrow on this head. But happiness is not always to be found in a marquee, any more than in a tent; and though the officers' quarters may look more tempting than the rest of the barracks, there is often great misery between husband and wife inside of their doors."

"I do not doubt it in the least, Pathfinder; and, did it rest with me to decide, I would sooner follow you to some cabin in the woods, and share your fortune, whether it might be better or worse, than go inside the door of any officer I know, with an intention of remaining there as its master's wife."

"Mabel, this is not what Lundie hopes, or Lundie thinks."

"And what care I for Lundie? He is major of the 55th, and may command his men to wheel and march about as he pleases; but he cannot compel me to wed the greatest or the meanest of his mess. Besides, what can you know of Lundie's wishes on such a subject?"

"From Lundie's own mouth. The Sergeant had told him that he wished me for a son-in-law; and the Major, being an old and a true friend, conversed with me on the subject. He put it to me plainly, whether it would not be more ginerous in me to let an officer succeed, than to strive to make you share a hunter's fortune. I owned the truth, I did; and that was, that I thought it might; but when he told me that the Quartermaster would be his choice, I would not abide by the conditions. No, no, Mabel; I know Davy Muir well, and though he may make you a lady, he can never make you a happy woman, or himself a gentleman."

"My father has been very wrong if he has said or done aught to cause you sorrow, Pathfinder; and so great is my respect for you, so sincere my friendship, that were it not for one — I mean that no person need fear Lieutenant Muir's influence with me — I would rather remain as I am to my dying day than become a lady at the cost of being his wife."

"I do not think you would say that which you do not feel, Mabel," returned Pathfinder earnestly.

"Not at such a moment, on such a subject, and least of all to you. No; Lieutenant Muir may find wives where he can — my name shall never be on his catalogue."

"Thank you, thank you for that, Mabel, for, though there is no longer any hope for me, I could never be happy were you to take to the Quartermaster. I feared the commission might count for something, I did; and I know the man. It is not jealousy that makes me speak in this manner, but truth, for I know the man. Now, were you to fancy a desarving youth, one like Jasper Western, for instance —"

"Why always mention Jasper Eau-douce, Pathfinder? he can have no concern with our friendship; let us talk of yourself, and of the manner in which you intend to pass the winter."

"Ah's me! — I'm little worth at the best, Mabel, unless it may be on a trail or with the rifle; and less worth now that I have discovered the Sergeant's mistake. There is no need, therefore, of talking of me. It has been very pleasant to me to be near you so long, and even to fancy that the Sergeant was right; but that is all over now. I shall go down the lake with Jasper, and then there will be business to occupy us, and that will keep useless thoughts out of the mind."

"And you will forget this — forget me — no, not forget me, either, Pathfinder; but you will resume your old pursuits, and cease to think a girl of sufficient importance to disturb your peace?"

"I never knowed it afore, Mabel; but girls are of more account in this life than I could have believed. Now, afore I knowed you, the new-born babe did not sleep more sweetly than I used; my head was no sooner on the root, or the stone, or mayhap on the skin, than all was lost to the senses, unless it might be to go over in the night the business of the day in a dream like; and there I lay till the moment came to be stirring, and the swallows were not more certain to be on the wing with the light, than I to be afoot at the moment I wished to be. All this seemed a gift, and might be calculated on even in the midst of a Mingo camp; for I've been outlying in my time, in the very villages of the vagabonds."

"And all this will return to you, Pathfinder, for one so upright and sincere will never waste his happiness on a mere fancy. You will dream again of your hunts, of the deer you have slain, and of the beaver you have taken."

"Ah's me, Mabel, I wish never to dream again! Before we met, I had a sort of pleasure in following up the hounds, in fancy, as it might be; and even in striking a trail of the Iroquois — nay, I've been in skirmishes and ambushments, in thought like, and found satisfaction in it, according to my gifts; but all those things have lost their charms since I've made acquaintance with you. Now, I think no longer of anything rude in my dreams; but the very last night we stayed in the garrison I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds among the branches sang ballads instead of the notes that nature gave, and even the deer stopped to listen. I tried to shoot a fa'n, but Killdeer missed fire, and the creatur' laughed in my face, as pleasantly as a young girl laughs in her merriment, and then it bounded away, looking back as if expecting me to follow."

"No more of this, Pathfinder; we'll talk no more of these things," said Mabel, dashing the tears from her eyes: for the simple, earnest manner in which this hardy woodsman betrayed the deep hold she had taken of his feelings nearly proved too much for her own generous heart. "Now, let us look for my father; he cannot be distant, as I heard his gun quite near."

"The Sergeant was wrong — yes, he was wrong, and it's of no avail to attempt to make the dove consort with the wolf."

"Here comes my dear father," interrupted Mabel. "Let us look cheerful and happy, Pathfinder, as such good friends ought to look, and keep each other's secrets."

A pause succeeded; the Sergeant's foot was heard crushing the dried twigs hard by, and then his form appeared shoving aside the bushes of a copse just near. As he issued into the open ground, the old soldier scrutinized his daughter and her companion, and speaking good-naturedly, he said, "Mabel, child, you are young and light of foot — look for a bird that I've shot that fell just beyond the thicket of young hemlocks on the shore; and, as Jasper is showing signs of an intention of getting under way, you need not take the trouble to clamber up this hill again, but we will meet you on the beach in a few minutes."

Mabel obeyed, bounding down the hill with the elastic step of youth and health. But, notwithstanding the lightness of her steps, the heart of the girl was heavy, and no sooner was she hid from observation by the thicket, than she threw herself on the root of a tree and wept as if her heart would break. The Sergeant watched her until she disappeared, with a father's pride, and then turned to his companion with a smile as kind and as familiar as his habits would allow him to use towards any.

"She has her mother's lightness and activity, my friend, with somewhat of her father's force," said he. "Her mother was not quite so handsome, I think myself; but the Dunhams were always thought comely, whether men or women. Well, Pathfinder, I take it for granted you've not overlooked the opportunity, but have spoken plainly to the girl? women like frankness in matters of this sort."

"I believe Mabel and I understand each other at last, Sergeant," returned the other, looking another way to avoid the soldier's face.

"So much the better. Some people fancy that a little doubt and uncertainty makes love all the livelier; but I am one of

those who think the plainer the tongue speaks the easier the mind will comprehend. Was Mabel surprised?"

"I fear she was, Sergeant; I fear she was taken quite by surprise — yes, I do."

"Well, well, surprises in love are like an ambush in war, and quite as lawful; though it is not so easy to tell when a woman is surprised, as to tell when it happens to an enemy. Mabel did not run away, my worthy friend, did she?"

"No, Sergeant, Mabel did not try to escape; *that* I can say with a clear conscience."

"I hope the girl was too willing, neither! Her mother was shy and coy for a month, at least; but frankness, after all, is a recommendation in a man or woman."

"That it is, that it is; and judgment, too."

"You are not to look for too much judgment in a young creature of twenty, Pathfinder, but it will come with experience. A mistake in you or me, for instance, might not be so easily overlooked; but in a girl of Mabel's years, one is not to strain at a gnat lest they swallow a camel."

The reader will remember that Sergeant Dunham was not a Hebrew scholar.

The muscles of the listener's face twitched as the Sergeant was thus delivering his sentiments, though the former had now recovered a portion of that stoicism which formed so large a part of his character, and which he had probably imbibed from long association with the Indians. His eyes rose and fell, and once a gleam shot athwart his hard features as if he were about to indulge in his peculiar laugh; but the joyous feeling, if it really existed, was as quickly lost in a look allied to anguish. It was this unusual mixture of wild and keen mental agony with native, simple joyousness, which had most struck Mabel, who, in the interview just related, had a dozen times been on the point of believing that her suitor's heart was only lightly touched, as images of happiness and humor gleamed over a mind that was almost infantile in its simplicity and nature; an impression, however, which was soon driven away by the discovery of emotions so painful and so deep, that they seemed to harrow the very soul.

"You say true, Sergeant," Pathfinder answered; "a mistake in one like you is a more serious matter."

"You will find Mabel sincere and honest in the end; give her but a little time."

"Ah's me, Sergeant!"

"A man of your merits would make an impression on a rock, give him time, Pathfinder."

"Sergeant Dunham, we are old fellow-campaigners — that is, as campaigns are carried on here in the wilderness; and we have done so many kind acts to each other that we can afford to be candid — what has caused you to believe that a girl like Mabel could ever fancy one so rude as I am?"

"What? — why, a variety of reasons, and good reasons too, my friend. Those same acts of kindness, perhaps, and the campaigns you mention; moreover, you are my sworn and tried comrade."

"All this sounds well, so far as you and I are concerned; but they do not touch the case of your pretty daughter. She may think these very campaigns have destroyed the little comeliness I may once have had; and I am not quite certain that being an old friend of her father would lead any young maiden's mind into a particular affection for a suitor. Like loves like, I tell you, Sergeant; and my gifts are not altogether the gifts of Mabel Dunham."

"These are some of your old modest qualms, Pathfinder, and will do you no credit with the girl. Women distrust men who distrust themselves, and take to men who distrust nothing. Modesty is a capital thing in a recruit, I grant you; or in a young subaltern who has just joined, for it prevents his railing at the non-commissioned officers before he knows what to rail at; I'm not sure it is out of place in a commissary or a parson, but it's the devil and all when it gets possession of a real soldier or a lover. Have as little to do with it as possible, if you would win a woman's heart. As for your doctrine that like loves like, it is as wrong as possible in matters of this sort. If like loved like, women would love one another, and men also. No, no, like loves dislike," — the Sergeant was merely a scholar of the camp — "and you have nothing to fear from Mabel on that score. Look at Lieutenant Muir; the man has had five wives already, they tell me, and there is no more modesty in him than there is in a cat-o'-nine-tails."

"Lieutenant Muir will never be the husband of Mabel Dunham, let him ruffle his feathers as much as he may."

"That is a sensible remark of yours, Pathfinder; for my mind is made up that you shall be my son-in-law. If I were an officer myself, Mr. Muir might have some chance; but time has placed one door between my child and myself, and I don't intend there shall be that of a marquee also."

"Sergeant, we must let Mabel follow her own fancy; she is young and light of heart, and God forbid that any wish of mine should lay the weight of a feather on a mind that is all gaiety now, or take one note of happiness from her laughter!"

"Have you conversed freely with the girl?" the Sergeant demanded quickly, and with some asperity of manner.

Pathfinder was too honest to deny a truth plain as that which the answer required, and yet too honorable to betray Mabel, and expose her to the resentment of one whom he well knew to be stern in his anger.

"We have laid open our minds," he said; "and though Mabel's is one that any man might love to look at, I find little there, Sergeant, to make me think any better of myself."

"The girl has not dared to refuse you — to refuse her father's best friend?"

Pathfinder turned his face away to conceal the look of anguish that consciousness told him was passing athwart it, but he continued the discourse in his own quiet, manly tones.

"Mabel is too kind to refuse anything, or to utter harsh words to a dog. I have not put the question in a way to be downright refused, Sergeant."

"And did you expect my daughter to jump into your arms before you asked her? She would not have been her mother's child had she done any such thing, nor do I think she would have been mine. The Dunhams like plain dealing as well as the king's majesty; but they are no jumpers. Leave me to manage this matter for you, Pathfinder, and there shall be no unnecessary delay. I'll speak to Mabel myself this very evening, using your name as principal in the affair."

"I'd rather not, I'd rather not, Sergeant. Leave the matter to Mabel and me, and I think all will come right in the end. Young girls are like timorous birds; they do not over-relish being hurried or spoken harshly to nither. Leave the matter to Mabel and me."

"On one condition I will, my friend; and that is, that you will promise me, on the honor of a scout, that you will put the matter plainly to Mabel the first suitable opportunity, and no mincing of words."

"I will ask her, Sergeant, on condition that you promise not to meddle in the affair — yes, I will promise to ask Mabel whether she will marry me, even though she laugh in my face at my doing so, on that condition."

Sergeant Dunham gave the desired promise very cheerfully; for he had completely wrought himself up into the belief that the man he so much esteemed himself must be acceptable to his daughter. He had married a woman much younger than himself, and he saw no unfitness in the respective years of the intended couple. Mabel was educated so much above him, too, that he was not aware of the difference which actually existed between the parent and child in this respect. It followed that Sergeant Dunham was not altogether qualified to appreciate his daughter's tastes, or to form a very probable conjecture what would be the direction taken by those feelings which oftener depend on impulses and passion than on reason. Still, the worthy soldier was not so wrong in his estimate of the Pathfinder's chances as might at first appear. Knowing all the sterling qualities of the man, his truth, integrity of purpose, courage, self-devotion, disinterestedness, it was far from unreasonable to suppose that qualities like these would produce a deep impression on any female heart; and the father erred principally in fancying that the daughter might know as it might be by intuition what he himself had acquired by years of intercourse and adventure.

As Pathfinder and his military friend descended the hill to the shore of the lake, the discourse did not flag. The latter continued to persuade the former that his diffidence alone prevented complete success with Mabel, and that he had only to persevere in order to prevail. Pathfinder was much too modest by nature, and had been too plainly, though so delicately, discouraged in the recent interview to believe all he heard; still the father used so many arguments which seemed plausible, and it was so grateful to fancy that the daughter might yet be his, that the reader is not to be surprised when he is told that this unsophisticated being did not view Mabel's recent conduct in precisely the light in which he may be inclined to view it himself. He did not credit all that the Sergeant told him, it is true; but he began to think virgin coyness and ignorance of her own feelings might have induced Mabel to use the language she had.

"The Quartermaster is no favorite," said Pathfinder in answer to one of his companion's remarks. "Mabel will never look on him as more than one who has had four or five wives already."

"Which is more than his share. A man may marry twice without offence to good morals and decency, I allow! but four times is an aggravation."

"I should think even marrying once what Master Cap calls a circumstance," put in Pathfinder, laughing in his quiet way, for by this time his spirits had recovered some of their buoyancy.

“It is, indeed, my friend, and a most solemn circumstance too. If it were not that Mabel is to be your wife, I would advise you to remain single. But here is the girl herself, and discretion is the word.”

“Ah’s me, Sergeant, I fear you are mistaken!”



## CHAPTER 19.

*Thus was this place  
A happy rural seat of various view.*

—MILTON.

Mabel was in waiting on the beach, and the canoe was soon launched. Pathfinder carried the party out through the surf in the same skillful manner that he had brought it in; and though Mabel's color heightened with excitement, and her heart seemed often ready to leap out of her mouth again, they reached the side of the *Scud* without having received even a drop of spray.

Ontario is like a quick-tempered man, sudden to be angered, and as soon appeased. The sea had already fallen; and though the breakers bounded the shore, far as the eye could reach, it was merely in lines of brightness, that appeared and vanished like the returning waves produced by a stone which had been dropped into a pool. The cable of the *Scud* was scarcely seen above the water, and Jasper had already hoisted his sails, in readiness to depart as soon as the expected breeze from the shore should fill the canvas.

It was just sunset as the cutter's mainsail flapped and its stem began to sever the water. The air was light and southerly, and the head of the vessel was kept looking up along the south shore, it being the intention to get to the eastward again as fast as possible. The night that succeeded was quiet; and the rest of those who slept deep and tranquil.

Some difficulty occurred concerning the command of the vessel, but the matter had been finally settled by an amicable compromise. As the distrust of Jasper was far from being appeased, Cap retained a supervisory power, while the young man was allowed to work the craft, subject, at all times, to the control and interference of the old seaman. To this Jasper consented, in preference to exposing Mabel any longer to the dangers of their present situation; for, now that the violence of the elements had ceased, he well knew that the *Montcalm* would be in search of them. He had the discretion, however, not to reveal his apprehensions on this head; for it happened that the very means he deemed the best to escape the enemy were those which would be most likely to awaken new suspicions of his honesty in the minds of those who held the power to defeat his intentions. In other words, Jasper believed that the gallant young Frenchman, who commanded the ship of the enemy, would quit his anchorage under the fort at Niagara, and stand up the lake, as soon as the wind abated, in order to ascertain the fate of the *Scud*, keeping midway between the two shores as the best means of commanding a broad view; and that, on his part, it would be expedient to hug one coast or the other, not only to avoid a meeting, but as affording a chance of passing without detection by blending his sails and spars with objects on the land. He preferred the south because it was the weather shore, and because he thought it was that which the enemy would the least expect him to take, though it necessarily led near his settlements, and in front of one of the strongest posts he held in that part of the world.

Of all this, however, Cap was happily ignorant, and the Sergeant's mind was too much occupied with the details of his military trust to enter into these niceties, which so properly belonged to another profession. No opposition was made, therefore, and before morning Jasper had apparently dropped quietly into all his former authority, issuing his orders freely, and meeting with obedience without hesitation or cavil.

The appearance of day brought all on board on deck again; and, as is usual with adventurers on the water, the opening horizon was curiously examined, as objects started out of the obscurity, and the panorama brightened under the growing light. East, west, and north nothing was visible but water glittering in the rising sun; but southward stretched the endless belt of woods that then held Ontario in a setting of forest verdure. Suddenly an opening appeared ahead, and then the massive walls of a chateau-looking house, with outworks, bastions, blockhouses, and palisadoes, frowned on a headland that bordered the outlet of a broad stream. Just as the fort became visible, a little cloud rose over it, and the white ensign of France was seen fluttering from a lofty flagstaff.

Cap gave an ejaculation as he witnessed this ungrateful exhibition, and he cast a quick suspicious glance at his brother-in-law.

"The dirty tablecloth hung up to air, as my name is Charles Cap!" he muttered; "and we hugging this d — d shore as if it were our wife and children met on the return from an India v'y'ge! Hark'e, Jasper, are you in search of a cargo of frogs, that you keep so near in to this New France?"

"I hug the land, sir, in the hope of passing the enemy's ship without being seen, for I think she must be somewhere down here to leeward."

"Ay, ay, this sounds well, and I hope it may turn out as you say. I trust there is no under-tow here?"

"We are on a weather shore, now," said Jasper, smiling; "and I think you will admit, Master Cap, that a strong under-tow makes an easy cable: we owe all our lives to the under-tow of this very lake."

"French flummery!" growled Cap, though he did not care to be heard by Jasper. "Give me a fair, honest, English-Yankee-American tow, above board, and above water too, if I must have a tow at all, and none of your sneaking drift that is below the surface, where one can neither see nor feel. I daresay, if the truth could be come at, that this late escape of ours was all a contrived affair."

"We have now a good opportunity, at least, to reconnoitre the enemy's post at Niagara, brother, for such I take this fort to be," put in the Sergeant. "Let us be all eyes in passing, and remember that we are almost in face of the enemy."

This advice of the Sergeant needed nothing to enforce it; for the interest and novelty of passing a spot occupied by human beings were of themselves sufficient to attract deep attention in that scene of a vast but deserted nature. The wind was now fresh enough to urge the *Scud* through the water with considerable velocity, and Jasper eased her helm as she opened the river, and luffed nearly into the mouth of that noble strait, or river, as it is termed. A dull, distant, heavy roar came down through the opening in the banks, swelling on the currents of the air, like the deeper notes of some immense organ, and occasionally seeming to cause the earth itself to tremble.

"That sounds like surf on some long unbroken coast!" exclaimed Cap, as a swell, deeper than common, came to his ears.

"Ay, that is such surf as we have in this quarter of the world," Pathfinder answered. "There is no under-tow there, Master Cap; but all the water that strikes the rocks stays there, so far as going back again is concerned. That is old Niagara that you hear, or this noble stream tumbling down a mountain."

"No one will have the impudence to pretend that this fine broad river falls over yonder hills?"

"It does, Master Cap, it does; and all for the want of stairs, or a road to come down by. This is natur', as we have it up hereaway, though I daresay you beat us down on the ocean. Ah's me, Mabel! a pleasant hour it would be if we could walk on the shore some ten or fifteen miles up this stream, and gaze on all that God has done there."

"You have, then, seen these renowned falls, Pathfinder?" the girl eagerly inquired.

"I have — yes, I have; and an awful sight I witnessed at that same time. The Serpent and I were out scouting about the garrison there, when he told me that the traditions of his people gave an account of a mighty cataract in this neighborhood, and he asked me to vary from the line of march a little to look at the wonder. I had heard some marvels concerning the spot from the soldiers of the 60th, which is my nat'ral corps like, and not the 55th, with which I have sojourned so much of late; but there are so many terrible liars in all rijiments that I hardly believed half they had told me. Well, we went; and though we expected to be led by our ears, and to hear some of that awful roaring that we hear to-day, we were disappointed, for natur' was not then speaking in thunder, as she is this morning. Thus it is in the forest, Master Cap; there being moments when God seems to be walking abroad in power, and then, again, there is a calm over all, as if His spirit lay in quiet along the 'arth. Well, we came suddenly upon the stream, a short distance above the fall, and a young Delaware, who was in our company, found a bark canoe, and he would push into the current to reach an island that lies in the very centre of the confusion and strife. We told him of his folly, we did; and we reasoned with him on the wickedness of tempting Providence by seeking danger that led to no ind; but the youth among the Delawares are very much the same as the youth among the soldiers, risky and vain. All we could say did not change his mind, and the lad had his way. To me it seems, Mabel, that whenever a thing is really grand and potent, it has a quiet majesty about it, altogether unlike the frothy and flustering manner of smaller matters, and so it was with them rapids. The canoe was no sooner fairly in them, than down it went, as it might be, as one sails through the air on the 'arth, and no skill of the young Delaware could resist the stream. And yet he struggled manfully for life, using the paddle to the last, like the deer that is swimming to cast the hounds. At first he shot across the current so swiftly, that we thought he would prevail; but he had miscalculated his distance, and when the truth really struck him, he turned the head upstream, and struggled in a way that was fearful to look at. I could have pitied him even had he been a Mingo. For a few moments his efforts were so frantic that he actually prevailed over the power of the cataract; but natur' has its limits, and one faltering stroke of the paddle set him back, and then he lost ground, foot by foot,



inch by inch, until he got near the spot where the river looked even and green, and as if it were made of millions of threads of water, all bent over some huge rock, when he shot backwards like an arrow and disappeared, the bow of the canoe tipping just enough to let us see what had become of him. I met a Mohawk some years later who had witnessed the whole affair from the bed of the stream below, and he told me that the Delaware continued to paddle in the air until he was lost in the mists of the falls."

"And what became of the poor wretch?" demanded Mabel, who had been strongly interested by the natural eloquence of the speaker.

"He went to the happy hunting-grounds of his people, no doubt; for though he was risky and vain, he was also just and brave. Yes, he died foolishly, but the Manitou of the red-skins has compassion on his creature's as well as the God of a Christian."

A gun at this moment was discharged from a blockhouse near the fort; and the shot, one of light weight, came whistling over the cutter's mast, an admonition to approach no nearer. Jasper was at the helm, and he kept away, smiling at the same time as if he felt no anger at the rudeness of the salutation. The *Scud* was now in the current, and her outward set soon carried her far enough to leeward to avoid the danger of a repetition of the shot, and then she quietly continued her course along the land. As soon as the river was fairly opened, Jasper ascertained that the *Montcalm* was not at anchor in it; and a man sent aloft came down with the report that the horizon showed no sail. The hope was now strong that the artifice of Jasper had succeeded, and that the French commander had missed them by keeping the middle of the lake as he steered towards its head.

All that day the wind hung to the southward, and the cutter continued her course about a league from the land, running six or eight knots the hour in perfectly smooth water. Although the scene had one feature of monotony, the outline of unbroken forest, it was not without its interest and pleasures. Various headlands presented themselves, and the cutter, in running from one to another, stretched across bays so deep as almost to deserve the name of gulfs. But nowhere did the eye meet with the evidences of civilization; rivers occasionally poured their tribute into the great reservoir of the lake, but their banks could be traced inland for miles by the same outlines of trees; and even large bays, that lay embosomed in woods, communicating with Ontario only by narrow outlets, appeared and disappeared, without bringing with them a single trace of a human habitation.

Of all on board, the Pathfinder viewed the scene with the most unmingled delight. His eyes feasted on the endless line of forest, and more than once that day, notwithstanding he found it so grateful to be near Mabel, listening to her pleasant voice, and echoing, in feelings at least, her joyous laugh, did his soul pine to be wandering beneath the high arches of the maples, oaks, and lindens, where his habits had induced him to fancy lasting and true joys were only to be found. Cap viewed the prospect differently; more than once he expressed his disgust at there being no lighthouses, church-towers, beacons, or roadsteads with their shipping. Such another coast, he protested, the world did not contain; and, taking the Sergeant aside, he gravely assured him that the region could never come to anything, as the havens were neglected, the rivers had a deserted and useless look, and that even the breeze had a smell of the forest about it, which spoke ill of its properties.

But the humors of the different individuals in her did not stay the speed of the *Scud*: when the sun was setting, she was already a hundred miles on her route towards Oswego, into which river Sergeant Dunham now thought it his duty to go, in order to receive any communications that Major Duncan might please to make. With a view to effect this purpose, Jasper continued to hug the shore all night; and though the wind began to fail him towards morning, it lasted long enough to carry the cutter up to a point that was known to be but a league or two from the fort. Here the breeze came out light at the northward, and the cutter hauled a little from the land, in order to obtain a safe offing should it come on to blow, or should the weather again get to be easterly.

When the day dawned, the cutter had the mouth of the Oswego well under the lee, distant about two miles; and just as the morning gun from the fort was fired, Jasper gave the order to ease off the sheets, and to bear up for his port. At that moment a cry from the fore-castle drew all eyes towards the point on the eastern side of the outlet, and there, just without the range of shot from the light guns of the works, with her canvas reduced to barely enough to keep her stationary, lay the *Montcalm*, evidently in waiting for their appearance.

To pass her was impossible, for by filling her sails the French ship could have intercepted them in a few minutes; and

the circumstances called for a prompt decision. After a short consultation, the Sergeant again changed his plan, determining to make the best of his way towards the station for which he had been originally destined, trusting to the speed of the *Scud* to throw the enemy so far astern as to leave no clue to her movements.

The cutter accordingly hauled upon a wind with the least possible delay, with everything set that would draw. Guns were fired from the fort, ensigns shown, and the ramparts were again crowded. But sympathy was all the aid that Lundie could lend to his party; and the *Montcalm*, also firing four or five guns of defiance, and throwing abroad several of the banners of France, was soon in chase under a cloud of canvas.

For several hours the two vessels were pressing through the water as fast as possible, making short stretches to windward, apparently with a view to keep the port under their lee, the one to enter it if possible, and the other to intercept it in the attempt.

At meridian the French ship was hull down, dead to leeward, the disparity of sailing on a wind being very great, and some islands were near by, behind which Jasper said it would be possible for the cutter to conceal her future movements. Although Cap and the Sergeant, and particularly Lieutenant Muir, to judge by his language, still felt a good deal of distrust of the young man, and Frontenac was not distant, this advice was followed; for time pressed, and the Quartermaster discreetly observed that Jasper could not well betray them without running openly into the enemy's harbor, a step they could at any time prevent, since the only cruiser of force the French possessed at the moment was under their lee and not in a situation to do them any immediate injury.

Left to himself, Jasper Western soon proved how much was really in him. He weathered upon the islands, passed them, and on coming out to the eastward, kept broad away, with nothing in sight in his wake or to leeward. By sunset again the cutter was up with the first of the islands that lie in the outlet of the lake; and ere it was dark she was running through the narrow channels on her way to the long-sought station. At nine o'clock, however, Cap insisted that they should anchor; for the maze of islands became so complicated and obscure, that he feared, at every opening, the party would find themselves under the guns of a French fort. Jasper consented cheerfully, it being a part of his standing instructions to approach the station under such circumstances as would prevent the men from obtaining any very accurate notions of its position, lest a deserter might betray the little garrison to the enemy.

The *Scud* was brought to in a small retired bay, where it would have been difficult to find her by daylight, and where she was perfectly concealed at night, when all but a solitary sentinel on deck sought their rest. Cap had been so harassed during the previous eight-and-forty hours, that his slumbers were long and deep; nor did he awake from his first nap until the day was just beginning to dawn. His eyes were scarcely open, however, when his nautical instinct told him that the cutter was under way. Springing up, he found the *Scud* threading the islands again, with no one on deck but Jasper and the pilot, unless the sentinel be excepted, who had not in the least interfered with movements that he had every reason to believe were as regular as they were necessary.

"How's this, Master Western?" demanded Cap, with sufficient fierceness for the occasion; "are you running us into Frontenac at last, and we all asleep below, like so many mariners waiting for the 'sentry go'?"

"This is according to orders, Master Cap, Major Duncan having commanded me never to approach the station unless at a moment when the people were below; for he does not wish there should be more pilots in those waters than the king has need of."

"Whe-e-e-w! a pretty job I should have made of running down among these bushes and rocks with no one on deck! Why, a regular York branch could make nothing of such a channel."

"I always thought, sir," said Jasper, smiling, "you would have done better had you left the cutter in my hands until she had safely reached her place of destination."

"We should have done it, Jasper, we should have done it, had it not been for a circumstance; these circumstances are serious matters, and no prudent man will overlook them."

"Well, sir, I hope there is now an end of them. We shall arrive in less than an hour if the wind holds, and then you'll be safe from any circumstances that I can contrive."

"Humph!"

Cap was obliged to acquiesce; and, as everything around him had the appearance of Jasper's being sincere, there was not much difficulty in making up his mind to submit. It would not have been easy indeed for a person the most sensitive on

the subject of circumstances to fancy that the *Scud* was anywhere in the vicinity of a port so long established and so well known on the frontiers as Frontenac. The islands might not have been literally a thousand in number, but they were so numerous and small as to baffle calculation, though occasionally one of larger size than common was passed. Jasper had quitted what might have been termed the main channel, and was winding his way, with a good stiff breeze and a favorable current, through passes that were sometimes so narrow that there appeared to be barely room sufficient for the *Scud*'s spars to clear the trees, while at other moments he shot across little bays, and buried the cutter again amid rocks, forests, and bushes. The water was so transparent that there was no occasion for the lead, and being of very equal depth, little risk was actually run, though Cap, with his maritime habits, was in a constant fever lest they should strike.

"I give it up, I give it up, Pathfinder!" the old seaman at length exclaimed, when the little vessel emerged in safety from the twentieth of these narrow inlets through which she had been so boldly carried; "this is defying the very nature of seamanship, and sending all its laws and rules to the d —-!"

"Nay, nay, Saltwater, 'tis the perfection of the art. You perceive that Jasper never falters, but, like a hound with a true nose, he runs with his head high as if he had a strong scent. My life on it, the lad brings us out right in the end, as he would have done in the beginning had we given him leave."

"No pilot, no lead, no beacons, buoys, or lighthouses, no —"

"Trail," interrupted Pathfinder; "for that to me is the most mysterious part of the business. Water leaves no trail, as every one knows; and yet here is Jasper moving ahead as boldly as if he had before his eyes the prints of the moccasins on leaves as plainly as we can see the sun in the heaven."

"D—me, if I believe there is even any compass!"

"Stand by to haul down the jib," called out Jasper, who merely smiled at the remarks of his companion. "Haul down — starboard your helm — starboard hard — so — meet her — gently there with the helm — touch her lightly — now jump ashore with the fast, lad — no, heave; there are some of our people ready to take it."

All this passed so quickly as barely to allow the spectator time to note the different evolutions, ere the *Scud* had been thrown into the wind until her mainsail shivered, next cast a little by the use of the rudder only, and then she set bodily alongside of a natural rocky quay, where she was immediately secured by good fasts run to the shore. In a word, the station was reached, and the men of the 55th were greeted by their expecting comrades, with the satisfaction which a relief usually brings.

Mabel sprang up on the shore with a delight which she did not care to express; and her father led his men after her with an alacrity which proved how wearied he had become of the cutter. The station, as the place was familiarly termed by the soldiers of the 55th, was indeed a spot to raise expectations of enjoyment among those who had been cooped up so long in a vessel of the dimensions of the *Scud*. None of the islands were high, though all lay at a sufficient elevation above the water to render them perfectly healthy and secure. Each had more or less of wood; and the greater number at that distant day were clothed with the virgin forest. The one selected by the troops for their purpose was small, containing about twenty acres of land, and by some of the accidents of the wilderness it had been partly stripped of its trees, probably centuries before the period of which we are writing, and a little grassy glade covered nearly half its surface.

The shores of Station Island were completely fringed with bushes, and great care had been taken to preserve them, as they answered as a screen to conceal the persons and things collected within their circle. Favored by this shelter, as well as by that of several thickets of trees and different copses, some six or eight low huts had been erected to be used as quarters for the officer and his men, to contain stores, and to serve the purposes of kitchen, hospital, etc. These huts were built of logs in the usual manner, had been roofed by bark brought from a distance, lest the signs of labor should attract attention, and, as they had now been inhabited some months, were as comfortable as dwellings of that description usually ever get to be.

At the eastern extremity of the island, however, was a small, densely-wooded peninsula, with a thicket of underbrush so closely matted as nearly to prevent the possibility of seeing across it, so long as the leaves remained on the branches. Near the narrow neck that connected this acre with the rest of the island, a small blockhouse had been erected, with some attention to its means of resistance. The logs were bullet-proof, squared and jointed with a care to leave no defenceless points; the windows were loopholes, the door massive and small, and the roof, like the rest of the structure, was framed of hewn timber, covered properly with bark to exclude the rain. The lower apartment as usual contained stores and

provisions; here indeed the party kept all their supplies; the second story was intended for a dwelling, as well as for the citadel, and a low garret was subdivided into two or three rooms, and could hold the pallets of some ten or fifteen persons. All the arrangements were exceedingly simple and cheap, but they were sufficient to protect the soldiers against the effects of a surprise. As the whole building was considerably less than forty feet high, its summit was concealed by the tops of the trees, except from the eyes of those who had reached the interior of the island. On that side the view was open from the upper loops, though bushes even there, more or less, concealed the base of the wooden tower.

The object being purely defence, care had been taken to place the blockhouse so near an opening in the limestone rock that formed the base of the island as to admit of a bucket being dropped into the water, in order to obtain that great essential in the event of a siege. In order to facilitate this operation, and to enfilade the base of the building, the upper stories projected several feet beyond the lower in the manner usual to blockhouses, and pieces of wood filled the apertures cut in the log flooring, which were intended as loops and traps. The communications between the different stories were by means of ladders. If we add that these blockhouses were intended as citadels for garrisons or settlements to retreat to, in the cases of attacks, the general reader will obtain a sufficiently correct idea of the arrangements it is our wish to explain.

But the situation of the island itself formed its principal merit as a military position. Lying in the midst of twenty others, it was not an easy matter to find it; since boats might pass quite near, and, by glimpses caught through the openings, this particular island would be taken for a part of some other. Indeed, the channels between the islands which lay around the one we have been describing were so narrow that it was even difficult to say which portions of the land were connected, or which separated, even as one stood in the centre, with the express desire of ascertaining the truth. The little bay in particular, which Jasper used as a harbor, was so embowered with bushes and shut in with islands, that, the sails of the cutter being lowered, her own people on one occasion had searched for hours before they could find the *Scud*, in their return from a short excursion among the adjacent channels in quest of fish. In short, the place was admirably adapted to its present objects, and its natural advantages had been as ingeniously improved as economy and the limited means of a frontier post would very well allow.

The hour which succeeded the arrival of the *Scud* was one of hurried excitement. The party in possession had done nothing worthy of being mentioned, and, wearied with their seclusion, they were all eager to return to Oswego. The Sergeant and the officer he came to relieve had no sooner gone through the little ceremonies of transferring the command, than the latter hurried on board the *Scud* with his whole party; and Jasper, who would gladly have passed the day on the island, was required to get under way forthwith, the wind promising a quick passage up the river and across the lake. Before separating, however, Lieutenant Muir, Cap, and the Sergeant had a private conference with the ensign who had been relieved, in which the last was made acquainted with the suspicions that existed against the fidelity of the young sailor. Promising due caution, the officer embarked, and in less than three hours from the time when she had arrived the cutter was again in motion.

Mabel had taken possession of a hut; and with female readiness and skill she made all the simple little domestic arrangements of which the circumstances would admit, not only for her own comfort, but for that of her father. To save labor, a mess-table was prepared in a hut set apart for that purpose, where all the heads of the detachment were to eat, the soldier's wife performing the necessary labor. The hut of the Sergeant, which was the best on the island, being thus freed from any of the vulgar offices of a household, admitted of such a display of womanly taste, that, for the first time since her arrival on the frontier, Mabel felt proud of her home. As soon as these important duties were discharged, she strolled out on the island, taking a path which led through the pretty glade, and which conducted to the only point not covered with bushes. Here she stood gazing at the limpid water, which lay with scarcely a ruffle on it at her feet, musing on the novel situation in which she was placed, and permitting a pleasing and deep excitement to steal over her feelings, as she remembered the scenes through which she had so lately passed, and conjectured those which still lay veiled in the future.

"You're a beautiful fixture, in a beautiful spot, Mistress Mabel," said David Muir, suddenly appearing at her elbow; "and I'll no' engage you're not just the handsomest of the two."

"I will not say, Mr. Muir, that compliments on my person are altogether unwelcome, for I should not gain credit for speaking the truth, perhaps," answered Mabel with spirit; "but I will say that if you would condescend to address to me some remarks of a different nature, I may be led to believe you think I have sufficient faculties to understand them."

"Hoot! your mind, beautiful Mabel, is polished just like the barrel of a soldier's musket, and your conversation is only too discreet and wise for a poor d —I who has been chewing birch up here these four years on the lines, instead of

receiving it in an application that has the virtue of imparting knowledge. But you are no' sorry, I take it, young lady, that you've got your pretty foot on *terra firma* once more."

"I thought so two hours since, Mr. Muir; but the *Scud* looks so beautiful as she sails through these vistas of trees, that I almost regret I am no longer one of her passengers."

As Mabel ceased speaking, she waved her handkerchief in return to a salutation from Jasper, who kept his eyes fastened on her form until the white sails of the cutter had swept round a point, and were nearly lost behind its green fringe of leaves.

"There they go, and I'll no' say 'joy go with them;' but may they have the luck to return safely, for without them we shall be in danger of passing the winter on this island; unless, indeed, we have the alternative of the castle at Quebec. Yon Jasper Eau-douce is a vagrant sort of a lad, and they have reports of him in the garrison that it pains my very heart to hear. Your worthy father, and almost as worthy uncle, have none of the best opinion of him."

"I am sorry to hear it, Mr. Muir; I doubt not that time will remove all their distrust."

"If time would only remove mine, pretty Mabel," rejoined the Quartermaster in a wheedling tone, "I should feel no envy of the commander-in-chief. I think if I were in a condition to retire, the Sergeant would just step into my shoes."

"If my dear father is worthy to step into your shoes, Mr. Muir," returned the girl, with malicious pleasure, "I'm sure that the qualification is mutual, and that you are every way worthy to step into his."

"The deuce is in the child! you would not reduce me to the rank of a non-commissioned officer, Mabel?"

"No, indeed, sir; I was not thinking of the army at all as you spoke of retiring. My thoughts were more egotistical, and I was thinking how much you reminded me of my dear father, by your experience, wisdom, and suitableness to take his place as the head of a family."

"As its bridegroom, pretty Mabel, but not as its parent or natural chief. I see how it is with you, loving your repartee, and brilliant with wit. Well, I like spirit in a young woman, so it be not the spirit of a scold. This Pathfinder is all extraordinair, Mabel, if truth may be said of the man."

"Truth should be said of him or nothing. Pathfinder is my friend — my very particular friend, Mr. Muir, and no evil can be said of him in my presence that I shall not deny."

"I shall say nothing evil of him, I can assure you, Mabel; but, at the same time, I doubt if much good can be said in his favor."

"He is at least expert with the rifle," returned Mabel, smiling. "That you cannot deny."

"Let him have all the credit of his exploits in that way if you please; but he is as illiterate as a Mohawk."

"He may not understand Latin, but his knowledge of Iroquois is greater than that of most men, and it is the more useful language of the two in this part of the world."

"If Lundie himself were to call on me for an opinion which I admire more, your person or your wit, beautiful and caustic Mabel, I should be at a loss to answer. My admiration is so nearly divided between them, that I often fancy this is the one that bears off the palm, and then the other! Ah! the late Mrs. Muir was a paragon in that way also."

"The latest Mrs. Muir, did you say, sir?" asked Mabel, looking up innocently at her companion.

"Hoot, hoot! That is some of Pathfinder's scandal. Now I daresay that the fellow has been trying to persuade you, Mabel, that I have had more than one wife already."

"In that case his time would have been thrown away, sir, as everybody knows that you have been so unfortunate as to have had four."

"Only three, as sure as my name is David Muir. The fourth is pure scandal — or rather, pretty Mabel, she is yet *in petto*, as they say at Rome; and that means, in matters of love, in the heart, my dear."

"Well, I'm glad I'm not that fourth person, *in petto*, or in anything else, as I should not like to be a scandal."

"No fear of that, charming Mabel; for were you the fourth, all the others would be forgotten, and your wonderful beauty and merit would at once elevate you to be the first. No fear of your being the fourth in any thing."

"There is consolation in that assurance, Mr. Muir," said Mabel, laughing, "whatever there may be in your other assurance; for I confess I should prefer being even a fourth-rate beauty to being a fourth wife."

So saying she tripped away, leaving the Quartermaster to meditate on his success. Mabel had been induced to use her

female means of defence thus freely, partly because her suitor had of late been so pointed as to stand in need of a pretty strong repulse, and partly on account of his innuendoes against Jasper and the Pathfinder. Though full of spirit and quick of intellect, she was not naturally pert; but on the present occasion she thought circumstances called for more than usual decision. When she left her companion, therefore, she believed she was now finally released from attentions which she thought as ill-bestowed as they were certainly disagreeable. Not so, however, with David Muir; accustomed to rebuffs, and familiar with the virtue of perseverance, he saw no reason to despair, though the half-menacing, half-self-satisfied manner in which he shook his head towards the retreating girl might have betrayed designs as sinister as they were determined. While he was thus occupied, the Pathfinder approached, and got within a few feet of him unseen.

"'Twill never do, Quartermaster, 'twill never do," commenced the latter, laughing in his noiseless way; "she is young and active, and none but a quick foot can overtake her. They tell me you are her suitor, if you are not her follower."

"And I hear the same of yourself, man, though the presumption would be so great that I scarcely can think it true."

"I fear you're right, I do; yes, I fear you're right; — when I consider myself, what I am, how little I know, and how rude my life has been, I altogether distrust my claim, even to think a moment of one so tutored, and gay, and light of heart, and delicate —"

"You forget handsome," coarsely interrupted Muir.

"And handsome, too, I fear," returned the meek and self-abased guide; "I might have said handsome at once, among her other qualities; for the young fa'n, just as it learns to bound, is not more pleasant to the eye of the hunter than Mabel is lovely in mine. I do indeed fear that all the thoughts I have harbored about her are vain and presumptuous."

"If you think this, my friend, of your own accord and natural modesty, as it might be, my duty to you as an old fellow-campaigner compels me to say —"

"Quartermaster," interrupted the other, regarding his companion keenly, "you and I have lived together much behind the ramparts of forts, but very little in the open woods or in front of the enemy."

"Garrison or tent, it all passes for part of the same campaign, you know, Pathfinder; and then my duty keeps me much within sight of the storehouses, greatly contrary to my inclinations, as ye may well suppose, having yourself the ardor of battle in your temperament. But had ye heard what Mabel had just been saying of you, ye'd no think another minute of making yourself agreeable to the saucy and uncompromising hussy."

Pathfinder looked earnestly at the lieutenant, for it was impossible he should not feel an interest in what might be Mabel's opinion; but he had too much of the innate and true feeling of a gentleman to ask to hear what another had said of him. Muir, however, was not to be foiled by this self-denial and self-respect; for, believing he had a man of great truth and simplicity to deal with, he determined to practise on his credulity, as one means of getting rid of his rivalry. He therefore pursued the subject, as soon as he perceived that his companion's self-denial was stronger than his curiosity.

"You ought to know her opinion, Pathfinder," he continued; "and I think every man ought to hear what his friends and acquaintances say of him: and so, by way of proving my own regard for your character and feelings, I'll just tell you in as few words as possible. You know that Mabel has a wicked, malicious way with them eyes of her own, when she has a mind to be hard upon one's feelings."

"To me her eyes, Lieutenant Muir, have always seemed winning and soft, though I will acknowledge that they sometimes laugh; yes, I have known them to laugh, and that right heartily, and with downright goodwill."

"Well, it was just that then; her eyes were laughing with all their might, as it were; and in the midst of all her fun, she broke out with an exclamation to this effect:— I hope 'twill no' hurt your sensibility, Pathfinder?"

"I will not say Quartermaster, I will not say. Mabel's opinion of me is of no more account than that of most others."

"Then I'll no' tell ye, but just keep discretion on the subject; and why should a man be telling another what his friends say of him, especially when they happen to say that which may not be pleasant to hear? I'll not add another word to this present communication."

"I cannot make you speak, Quartermaster, if you are not so minded, and perhaps it is better for me not to know Mabel's opinion, as you seem to think it is not in my favor. Ah's me! if we could be what we wish to be, instead of being only what we are, there would be a great difference in our characters and knowledge and appearance. One may be rude and coarse and ignorant, and yet happy, if he does not know it; but it is hard to see our own failings in the strongest light, just as we wish to hear the least about them."

"That's just the *rationale*, as the French say, of the matter; and so I was telling Mabel, when she ran away and left me. You noticed the manner in which she skipped off as you approached?"

"It was very observable," answered Pathfinder, drawing a long breath and clenching the barrel of his rifle as if the fingers would bury themselves in the iron.

"It was more than observable — it was flagrant; that's just the word, and the dictionary wouldn't supply a better, after an hour's search. Well, you must know, Pathfinder — for I cannot reasonably deny you the gratification of hearing this — so you must know the minx bounded off in that manner in preference to hearing what I had to say in your justification."

"And what could you find to say in my behalf, Quartermaster?"

"Why, d'ye understand, my friend, I was ruled by circumstances, and no' ventured indiscreetly into generalities, but was preparing to meet particulars, as it might be, with particulars. If you were thought wild, half-savage, or of a frontier formation, I could tell her, ye know, that it came of the frontier, wild and half-savage life ye'd led; and all her objections must cease at once, or there would be a sort of a misunderstanding with Providence."

"And did you tell her this, Quartermaster?"

"I'll no' swear to the exact words, but the idea was prevalent in my mind, ye'll understand. The girl was impatient, and would not hear the half I had to say; but away she skipped, as ye saw with your own eyes, Pathfinder, as if her opinion were fully made up, and she cared to listen no longer. I fear her mind may be said to have come to its conclusion?"

"I fear it has indeed, Quartermaster, and her father, after all, is mistaken. Yes, yes; the Sergeant has fallen into a grievous error."

"Well, man, why need ye lament, and undo all the grand reputation ye've been so many weary years making? Shoulder the rifle that ye use so well, and off into the woods with ye, for there's not the female breathing that is worth a heavy heart for a minute, as I know from experience. Tak' the word of one who knows the sax, and has had two wives, that women, after all, are very much the sort of creatures we do not imagine them to be. Now, if you would really mortify Mabel, here is as glorious an occasion as any rejected lover could desire."

"The last wish I have, Lieutenant, would be to mortify Mabel."

"Well, ye'll come to that in the end, notwithstanding; for it's human nature to desire to give unpleasant feelings to them that give unpleasant feelings to us. But a better occasion never offered to make your friends love you, than is to be had at this very moment, and that is the certain means of causing one's enemies to envy us."

"Quartermaster, Mabel is not my inimy; and if she was, the last thing I could desire would be to give her an uneasy moment."

"Ye say so, Pathfinder, ye say so, and I daresay ye think so; but reason and nature are both against you, as ye'll find in the end. Ye've heard the saying 'love me, love my dog;' well, now, that means, read backwards, 'don't love me, don't love my dog.' Now, listen to what is in your power to do. You know we occupy an exceedingly precarious and uncertain position here, almost in the jaws of the lion, as it were?"

"Do you mean the Frenchers by the lion, and this island as his jaws, Lieutenant?"

"Metaphorically only, my friend, for the French are no lions, and this island is not a jaw — unless, indeed, it may prove to be, what I greatly fear may come true, the jaw-bone of an ass."

Here the Quartermaster indulged in a sneering laugh, that proclaimed anything but respect and admiration for his friend Lundie's sagacity in selecting that particular spot for his operations.

"The post is as well chosen as any I ever put foot in," said Pathfinder, looking around him as one surveys a picture.

"I'll no' deny it, I'll no' deny it. Lundie is a great soldier, in a small way; and his father was a great laird, with the same qualification. I was born on the estate, and have followed the Major so long that I've got to reverence all he says and does; that's just my weakness, ye'll know, Pathfinder. Well, this post may be the post of an ass, or of a Solomon, as men fancy; but it's most critically placed, as is apparent by all Lundie's precautions and injunctions. There are savages out scouting through these Thousand Islands and over the forest, searching for this very spot, as is known to Lundie himself, on certain information; and the greatest service you can render the 55th is to discover their trails and lead them off on a false scent. Unhappily Sergeant Dunham has taken up the notion that the danger is to be apprehended from up-stream, because Frontenac lies above us; whereas all experience tells us that Indians come on the side which is most contrary to reason,

and, consequently, are to be expected from below. Take your canoe, therefore, and go down-stream among the islands, that we may have notice if any danger approaches from that quarter."

"The Big Serpent is on the look-out in that quarter; and as he knows the station well, no doubt he will give us timely notice, should any wish to sarcumvent us in that direction."

"He is but an Indian, after all, Pathfinder; and this is an affair that calls for the knowledge of a white man. Lundie will be eternally grateful to the man who shall help this little enterprise to come off with flying colors. To tell you the truth, my friend, he is conscious it should never have been attempted; but he has too much of the old laird's obstinacy about him to own an error, though it be as manifest as the morning star."

The Quartermaster then continued to reason with his companion, in order to induce him to quit the island without delay, using such arguments as first suggested themselves, sometimes contradicting himself, and not unfrequently urging at one moment a motive that at the next was directly opposed by another. The Pathfinder, simple as he was, detected these flaws in the Lieutenant's philosophy, though he was far from suspecting that they proceeded from a desire to clear the coast of Mabel's suitor. He did not exactly suspect the secret objects of Muir, but he was far from being blind to his sophistry. The result was that the two parted, after a long dialogue, unconvinced, and distrustful of each other's motives, though the distrust of the guide, like all that was connected with the man, partook of his own upright, disinterested, and ingenuous nature.

A conference that took place soon after between Sergeant Dunham and the Lieutenant led to more consequences. When it was ended, secret orders were issued to the men, the blockhouse was taken possession of, the huts were occupied, and one accustomed to the movements of soldiers might have detected that an expedition was in the wind. In fact, just as the sun was setting, the Sergeant, who had been much occupied at what was called the harbor, came into his own hut, followed by Pathfinder and Cap; and as he took his seat at the neat table which Mabel had prepared for him, he opened the budget of his intelligence.

"You are likely to be of some use here, my child," the old soldier commenced, "as this tidy and well-ordered supper can testify; and I trust, when the proper moment arrives, you will show yourself to be the descendant of those who know how to face their enemies."

"You do not expect me, dear father, to play Joan of Arc, and to lead the men to battle?"

"Play whom, child? Did you ever hear of the person Mabel mentions, Pathfinder?"

"Not I, Sergeant; but what of that? I am ignorant and uneducated, and it is too great a pleasure to me to listen to her voice, and take in her words, to be particular about persons."

"I know her," said Cap decidedly; "she sailed a privateer out of Morlaix in the last war; and good cruises she made of them."

Mabel blushed at having inadvertently made an allusion that went beyond her father's reading, to say nothing of her uncle's dogmatism, and, perhaps, a little at the Pathfinder's simple, ingenuous earnestness; but she did not forbear the less to smile.

"Why, father, I am not expected to fall in with the men, and to help defend the island?"

"And yet women have often done such things in this quarter of the world, girl, as our friend, the Pathfinder here, will tell you. But lest you should be surprised at not seeing us when you awake in the morning, it is proper that I now tell you we intend to march in the course of this very night."

"We, father! and leave me and Jennie on this island alone?"

"No, my daughter; not quite as unmilitary as that. We shall leave Lieutenant Muir, brother Cap, Corporal M'Nab, and three men to compose the garrison during our absence. Jennie will remain with you in this hut, and brother Cap will occupy my place."

"And Mr. Muir?" said Mabel, half unconscious of what she uttered, though she foresaw a great deal of unpleasant persecution in the arrangement.

"Why, he can make love to you, if you like it, girl; for he is an amorous youth, and, having already disposed of four wives, is impatient to show how much he honors their memories by taking a fifth."

"The Quartermaster tells me," said Pathfinder innocently, "that when a man's feelings have been harassed by so many



losses, there is no wiser way to soothe them than by ploughing up the soil anew, in such a manner as to leave no traces of what have gone over it before."

"Ay, that is just the difference between ploughing and harrowing," returned the Sergeant, with a grim smile. "But let him tell Mabel his mind, and there will be an end of his suit. I very well know that *my* daughter will never be the wife of Lieutenant Muir."

This was said in a way that was tantamount to declaring that no daughter of his ever *should* become the wife of the person in question. Mabel had colored, trembled, half laughed, and looked uneasy; but, rallying her spirit, she said, in a voice so cheerful as completely to conceal her agitation, "But, father, we might better wait until Mr. Muir manifests a wish that your daughter would have him, or rather a wish to have your daughter, lest we get the fable of sour grapes thrown into our faces."

"And what is that fable, Mabel?" eagerly demanded Pathfinder, who was anything but learned in the ordinary lore of white men. "Tell it to us, in your own pretty way; I daresay the Sergeant never heard it."

Mabel repeated the well-known fable, and, as her suitor had desired, in her own pretty way, which was a way to keep his eyes riveted on her face, and the whole of his honest countenance covered with a smile.

"That was like a fox!" cried Pathfinder, when she had ceased; "ay, and like a Mingo, too, cunning and cruel; that is the way with both the riptyles. As to grapes, they are sour enough in this part of the country, even to them that can get at them, though I daresay there are seasons and times and places where they are sourer to them that can't. I should judge, now, my scalp is very sour in Mingo eyes."

"The sour grapes will be the other way, child, and it is Mr. Muir who will make the complaint. You would never marry that man, Mabel?"

"Not she," put in Cap; "a fellow who is only half a soldier after all. The story of them there grapes is quite a circumstance."

"I think little of marrying any one, dear father and dear uncle, and would rather talk about it less, if you please. But, did I think of marrying at all, I do believe a man whose affections have already been tried by three or four wives would scarcely be my choice."

The Sergeant nodded at the guide, as much as to say, You see how the land lies; and then he had sufficient consideration for his daughter's feelings to change the subject.

"Neither you nor Mabel, brother Cap," he resumed, "can have any legal authority with the little garrison I leave behind on the island; but you may counsel and influence. Strictly speaking, Corporal M'Nab will be the commanding officer, and I have endeavored to impress him with a sense of his dignity, lest he might give way too much to the superior rank of Lieutenant Muir, who, being a volunteer, can have no right to interfere with the duty. I wish you to sustain the Corporal, brother Cap; for should the Quartermaster once break through the regulations of the expedition, he may pretend to command me, as well as M'Nab."

"More particularly, should Mabel really cut him adrift while you are absent. Of course, Sergeant, you'll leave everything that is afloat under my care? The most dreadful confusion has grown out of misunderstandings between commanders-in-chief, ashore and afloat."

"In one sense, brother, though in a general way, the Corporal is commander-in-chief. The Corporal must command; but you can counsel freely, particularly in all matters relating to the boats, of which I shall leave one behind to secure your retreat, should there be occasion. I know the Corporal well; he is a brave man and a good soldier; and one that may be relied on, if the Santa Cruz can be kept from him. But then he is a Scotchman, and will be liable to the Quartermaster's influence, against which I desire both you and Mabel to be on your guard."

"But why leave us behind, dear father? I have come thus far to be a comfort to you, and why not go farther?"

"You are a good girl, Mabel, and very like the Dunhams. But you must halt here. We shall leave the island to-morrow, before the day dawns, in order not to be seen by any prying eyes coming from our cover, and we shall take the two largest boats, leaving you the other and one bark canoe. We are about to go into the channel used by the French, where we shall lie in wait, perhaps a week, to intercept their supply-boats, which are about to pass up on their way to Frontenac, loaded, in particular, with a heavy amount of Indian goods."

"Have you looked well to your papers, brother?" Cap anxiously demanded. "Of course you know a capture on the high

seas is piracy, unless your boat is regularly commissioned, either as a public or a private armed cruiser.”

“I have the honor to hold the Colonel’s appointment as sergeant-major of the 55th,” returned the other, drawing himself up with dignity, “and that will be sufficient even for the French king. If not, I have Major Duncan’s written orders.”

“No papers, then, for a warlike cruiser?”

“They must suffice, brother, as I have no other. It is of vast importance to his Majesty’s interests, in this part of the world, that the boats in question should be captured and carried into Oswego. They contain the blankets, trinkets, rifles, ammunition, in short, all the stores with which the French bribe their accursed savage allies to commit their unholy acts, setting at nought our holy religion and its precepts, the laws of humanity, and all that is sacred and dear among men. By cutting off these supplies we shall derange their plans, and gain time on them; for the articles cannot be sent across the ocean again this autumn.”

“But, father, does not his Majesty employ Indians also?” asked Mabel, with some curiosity.

“Certainly, girl, and he has a right to employ them — God bless him! It’s a very different thing whether an Englishman or a Frenchman employs a savage, as everybody can understand.”

“But, father, I cannot see that this alters the case. If it be wrong in a Frenchman to hire savages to fight his enemies, it would seem to be equally wrong in an Englishman. *You* will admit this, Pathfinder?”

“It’s reasonable, it’s reasonable; and I have never been one of them that has raised a cry ag’in the Frenchers for doing the very thing we do ourselves. Still it is worse to consort with a Mingo than to consort with a Delaware. If any of that just tribe were left, I should think it no sin to send them out ag’in the foe.”

“And yet they scalp and slay young and old, women and children!”

“They have their gifts, Mabel, and are not to be blamed for following them; natur’ is natur’, though the different tribes have different ways of showing it. For my part I am white, and endeavor to maintain white feelings.”

“This is all unintelligible to me,” answered Mabel. “What is right in King George, it would seem, ought to be right in King Louis.”

As all parties, Mabel excepted, seemed satisfied with the course the discussion had taken, no one appeared to think it necessary to pursue the subject. Supper was no sooner ended than the Sergeant dismissed his guests, and then held a long and confidential dialogue with his daughter. He was little addicted to giving way to the gentler emotions, but the novelty of his present situation awakened feelings that he was unused to experience. The soldier or the sailor, so long as he acts under the immediate supervision of a superior, thinks little of the risks he runs, but the moment he feels the responsibility of command, all the hazards of his undertaking begin to associate themselves in his mind: with the chances of success or failure. While he dwells less on his own personal danger, perhaps, than when that is the principal consideration, he has more lively general perceptions of all the risks, and submits more to the influence of the feelings which doubt creates. Such was now the case with Sergeant Dunham, who, instead of looking forward to victory as certain, according to his usual habits, began to feel the possibility that he might be parting with his child for ever.

Never before had Mabel struck him as so beautiful as she appeared that night. Possibly she never had displayed so many engaging qualities to her father; for concern on his account had begun to be active in her breast; and then her sympathies met with unusual encouragement through those which had been stirred up in the sterner bosom of the veteran. She had never been entirely at her ease with her parent, the great superiority of her education creating a sort of chasm, which had been widened by the military severity of manner he had acquired by dealing so long with beings who could only be kept in subjection by an unremitted discipline. On the present occasion, however, the conversation between the father and daughter became more confidential than usual, until Mabel rejoiced to find that it was gradually becoming endearing, a state of feeling that the warm-hearted girl had silently pined for in vain ever since her arrival.

“Then mother was about my height?” Mabel said, as she held one of her father’s hands in both her own, looking up into his face with humid eyes. “I had thought her taller.”

“That is the way with most children who get a habit of thinking of their parents with respect, until they fancy them larger and more commanding than they actually are. Your mother, Mabel, was as near your height as one woman could be to another.”

“And her eyes, father?”

"Her eyes were like thine, child, too; blue and soft, and inviting like, though hardly so laughing."

"Mine will never laugh again, dearest father, if you do not take care of yourself in this expedition."

"Thank you, Mabel — hem — thank you, child; but I must do my duty. I wish I had seen you comfortably married before we left Oswego; my mind would be easier."

"Married! — to whom, father?"

"You know the man I wish you to love. You may meet with many gayer, and many dressed in finer clother; but with none with so true a heart and just a mind."

"None father?"

"I know of none; in these particulars Pathfinder has few equals at least."

"But I need not marry at all. You are single, and I can remain to take care of you."

"God bless you, Mabel! I know you would, and I do not say that the feeling is not right, for I suppose it is; and yet I believe there is another that is more so."

"What can be more right than to honor one's parents?"

"It is just as right to honor one's husband, my dear child."

"But I have no husband, father."

"Then take one as soon as possible, that you may have a husband to honor. I cannot live for ever, Mabel, but must drop off in the course of nature ere long, if I am not carried off in the course of war. You are young, and may yet live long; and it is proper that you should have a male protector, who can see you safe through life, and take care of you in age, as you now wish to take care of me."

"And do you think, father," said Mabel, playing with his sinewy fingers with her own little hands, and looking down at them, as if they were subjects of intense interest, though her lips curled in a slight smile as the words came from them — "and do you think, father, that Pathfinder is just the man to do this? Is he not, within ten or twelve years, as old as yourself?"

"What of that? His life has been one of moderation and exercise, and years are less to be counted, girl, than constitution. Do you know another more likely to be your protector?"

Mabel did not; at least another who had expressed a desire to that effect, whatever might have been her hopes and her wishes.

"Nay, father, we are not talking of another, but of the Pathfinder," she answered evasively. "If he were younger, I think it would be more natural for me to think of him for a husband."

"Tis all in the constitution, I tell you, child; Pathfinder is a younger man than half our subalterns."

"He is certainly younger than one, sir — Lieutenant Muir."

Mabel's laugh was joyous and light-hearted, as if just then she felt no care.

"That he is — young enough to be his grandson; he is younger in years, too. God forbid, Mabel, that you should ever become an officer's lady, at least until you are an officer's daughter!"

"There will be little fear of that, father, if I marry Pathfinder," returned the girl, looking up archly in the Sergeant's face again.

"Not by the king's commission, perhaps, though the man is even now the friend and companion of generals. I think I could die happy, Mabel, if you were his wife."

"Father!"

"Tis a sad thing to go into battle with the weight of an unprotected daughter laid upon the heart."

"I would give the world to lighten yours of its load, my dear sir."

"It might be done," said the Sergeant, looking fondly at his child; "though I could not wish to put a burthen on yours in order to do so."

The voice was deep and tremulous, and never before had Mabel witnessed such a show of affection in her parent. The habitual sternness of the man lent an interest to his emotions which they might otherwise have wanted, and the daughter's heart yearned to relieve the father's mind.

"Father, speak plainly!" she cried, almost convulsively.

"Nay, Mabel, it might not be right; your wishes and mine may be very different."

"I have no wishes — know nothing of what you mean. Would you speak of my future marriage?"

"If I could see you promised to Pathfinder — know that you were pledged to become his wife, let my own fate be what it might, I think I could die happy. But I will ask no pledge of you, my child; I will not force you to do what you might repent. Kiss me, Mabel, and go to your bed."

Had Sergeant Dunham exacted of Mabel the pledge that he really so much desired, he would have encountered a resistance that he might have found it difficult to overcome; but, by letting nature have its course, he enlisted a powerful ally on his side, and the warm-hearted, generous-minded Mabel was ready to concede to her affections much more than she would ever have yielded to menace. At that touching moment she thought only of her parent, who was about to quit her, perhaps for ever; and all of that ardent love for him, which had possibly been as much fed by the imagination as by anything else, but which had received a little check by the restrained intercourse of the last fortnight, now returned with a force that was increased by pure and intense feeling. Her father seemed all in all to her, and to render him happy there was no proper sacrifice which she was not ready to make. One painful, rapid, almost wild gleam of thought shot across the brain of the girl, and her resolution wavered; but endeavoring to trace the foundation of the pleasing hope on which it was based, she found nothing positive to support it. Trained like a woman to subdue her most ardent feelings, her thoughts reverted to her father, and to the blessings that awaited the child who yielded to a parent's wishes.

"Father," she said quietly, almost with a holy calm, "God blesses the dutiful daughter."

"He will, Mabel; we have the Good Book for that."

"I will marry whomever you desire."

"Nay, nay, Mabel, you may have a choice of your own —"

"I have no choice; that is, none have asked me to have a choice, but Pathfinder and Mr. Muir; and between *them*, neither of us would hesitate. No, father; I will marry whomever you may choose."

"Thou knowest my choice, beloved child; none other can make thee as happy as the noble-hearted guide."

"Well, then, if he wish it, if he ask me again — for, father, you would not have me offer myself, or that any one should do that office for me," and the blood stole across the pallid cheeks of Mabel as she spoke, for high and generous resolutions had driven back the stream of life to her heart; "no one must speak to him of it; but if he seek me again, and, knowing all that a true girl ought to tell the man she marries, he then wishes to make me his wife, I will be his."

"Bless you, my Mabel! God in heaven bless you, and reward you as a pious daughter deserves to be rewarded!"

"Yes, father, put your mind at peace; go on this expedition with a light heart, and trust in God. For me you will have now no care. In the spring — I must have a little time, father — but in the spring I will marry Pathfinder, if that noble-hearted hunter shall then desire it."

"Mabel, he loves you as I loved your mother. I have seen him weep like a child when speaking of his feelings towards you."

"Yes, I believe it; I've seen enough to satisfy me that he thinks better of me than I deserve; and certainly the man is not living for whom I have more respect than for Pathfinder; not even for you, dear father."

"That is as it should be, child, and the union will be blessed. May I not tell Pathfinder this?"

"I would rather you would not, father. Let it come of itself, come naturally." The smile that illuminated Mabel's handsome face was angelic, as even her parent thought, though one better practised in detecting the passing emotions, as they betray themselves in the countenance, might have traced something wild and unnatural in it. "No, no, *we* must let things take their course; father, you have my solemn promise."

"That will do, that will do, Mabel, now kiss me. God bless and protect you, girl! you are a good daughter."

Mabel threw herself into her father's arms — it was the first time in her life — and sobbed on his bosom like an infant. The stern soldier's heart was melted, and the tears of the two mingled; but Sergeant Dunham soon started, as if ashamed of himself, and, gently forcing his daughter from him, he bade her good-night, and sought his pallet. Mabel went sobbing to the rude corner that had been prepared for her reception; and in a few minutes the hut was undisturbed by any sound, save the heavy breathing of the veteran.

## CHAPTER 20.

*Wandering, I found on my ruinous walk,  
By the dial stone, aged and green,  
One rose of the wilderness, left on its stalk,  
To mark where a garden had been.*

—CAMPBELL.

It was not only broad daylight when Mabel awoke, but the sun had actually been up some time. Her sleep had been tranquil, for she rested on an approving conscience, and fatigue contributed to render it sweet; and no sound of those who had been so early in motion had interfered with her rest. Springing to her feet and rapidly dressing herself, the girl was soon breathing the fragrance of the morning in the open air. For the first time she was sensibly struck with the singular beauties, as well as with the profound retirement, of her present situation. The day proved to be one of those of the autumnal glory, so common to a climate that is more abused than appreciated, and its influence was every way inspiring and genial. Mabel was benefitted by this circumstance; for, as she fancied, her heart was heavy on account of the dangers to which a father, whom she now began to love as women love when confidence is created, was exposed.

But the island seemed absolutely deserted. The previous night, the bustle of the arrival had given the spot an appearance of life which was now entirely gone; and our heroine had turned her eyes nearly around on every object in sight, before she caught a view of a single human being to remove the sense of utter solitude. Then, indeed, she beheld all who were left behind, collected in a group around a fire which might be said to belong to the camp. The person of her uncle, to whom she was so much accustomed, reassured Mabel; and she examined the remainder with a curiosity natural to her situation. Besides Cap and the Quartermaster, there were the Corporal, the three soldiers, and the woman who was cooking. The huts were silent and empty; and the low but tower-like summit of the blockhouse rose above the bushes, by which it was half concealed, in picturesque beauty. The sun was just casting its brightness into the open places of the glade, and the vault over her head was impending in the soft sublimity of the blue void. Not a cloud was visible, and she secretly fancied the circumstance might be taken as a harbinger of peace and security.

Perceiving that all the others were occupied with that great concern of human nature, a breakfast, Mabel walked, unobserved, towards an end of the island where she was completely shut out of view by the trees and bushes. Here she got a stand on the very edge of the water, by forcing aside the low branches, and stood watching the barely perceptible flow and re-flow of the miniature waves which laved the shore; a sort of physical echo to the agitation that prevailed on the lake fifty miles above her. The glimpses of natural scenery that offered were very soft and pleasing; and our heroine, who had a quick eye for all that was lovely in nature, was not slow in selecting the most striking bits of landscape. She gazed through the different vistas formed by the openings between the islands, and thought she had never looked on aught more lovely.

While thus occupied, Mabel was suddenly alarmed by fancying that she caught a glimpse of a human form among the bushes that lined the shore of the island which lay directly before her. The distance across the water was not a hundred yards; and, though she might be mistaken, and her fancy was wandering when the form passed before her sight, still she did not think she could be deceived. Aware that her sex would be no protection against a rifle bullet, should an Iroquois get a view of her, the girl instinctively drew back, taking care to conceal her person as much as possible by the leaves, while she kept her own look riveted on the opposite shore, vainly waiting for some time in the expectation of the stranger. She was about to quit her post in the bushes and hasten to her uncle, in order to acquaint him of her suspicions, when she saw the branch of an alder thrust beyond the fringe of bushes on the other island, and waved towards her significantly, and as she fancied in token of amity. This was a breathless and a trying moment to one as inexperienced in frontier warfare as our heroine and yet she felt the great necessity that existed for preserving her recollection, and of acting with steadiness and discretion.

It was one of the peculiarities of the exposure to which those who dwelt on the frontiers of America were liable, to bring out the moral qualities of the women to a degree which they must themselves, under other circumstances, have believed they were incapable of manifesting; and Mabel well knew that the borderers loved to dwell in their legends on the presence of mind, fortitude, and spirit that their wives and sisters had displayed under circumstances the most trying. Her emulation had been awakened by what she had heard on such subjects; and it at once struck her that now was the moment

for her to show that she was truly Sergeant Dunham's child. The motion of the branch was such as she believed indicated amity; and, after a moment's hesitation, she broke off a twig, fastened it to a stick and, thrusting it through an opening, waved it in return, imitating as closely as possible the manner of the other.

This dumb show lasted two or three minutes on both sides, when Mabel perceived that the bushes opposite were cautiously pushed aside, and a human face appeared at an opening. A glance sufficed to let Mabel see that it was the countenance of a red-skin, as well as that of a woman. A second and a better look satisfied her that it was the face of the Dew-of-June, the wife of Arrowhead. During the time she had travelled in company with this woman, Mabel had been won by the gentleness of manner, the meek simplicity, and the mingled awe and affection with which she regarded her husband. Once or twice in the course of the journey she fancied the Tuscarora had manifested towards herself an unpleasant degree of attention; and on those occasions it had struck her that his wife exhibited sorrow and mortification. As Mabel, however, had more than compensated for any pain she might in this way unintentionally have caused her companion, by her own kindness of manner and attentions, the woman had shown much attachment to her, and they had parted, with a deep conviction on the mind of our heroine that in the Dew-of-June she had lost a friend.

It is useless to attempt to analyze all the ways by which the human heart is led into confidence. Such a feeling, however, had the young Tuscarora woman awakened in the breast of our heroine; and the latter, under the impression that this extraordinary visit was intended for her own good, felt every disposition to have a closer communication. She no longer hesitated about showing herself clear of the bushes, and was not sorry to see the Dew-of-June imitate her confidence, by stepping fearlessly out of her own cover. The two girls, for the Tuscarora, though married, was even younger than Mabel, now openly exchanged signs of friendship, and the latter beckoned to her friend to approach, though she knew not the manner herself in which this object could be effected. But the Dew-of-June was not slow in letting it be seen that it was in her power; for, disappearing in a moment, she soon showed herself again in the end of a bark canoe, the bows of which she had drawn to the edge of the bushes, and of which the body still lay in a sort of covered creek. Mabel was about to invite her to cross, when her own name was called aloud in the stentorian voice of her uncle. Making a hurried gesture for the Tuscarora girl to conceal herself, Mabel sprang from the bushes and tripped up the glade towards the sound, and perceived that the whole party had just seated themselves at breakfast; Cap having barely put his appetite under sufficient restraint to summon her to join them. That this was the most favorable instant for the interview flashed on the mind of Mabel; and, excusing herself on the plea of not being prepared for the meal, she bounded back to the thicket, and soon renewed her communications with the young Indian woman.

Dew-of-June was quick of comprehension; and with half a dozen noiseless strokes of the paddles, her canoe was concealed in the bushes of Station Island. In another minute, Mabel held her hand, and was leading her through the grove towards her own hut. Fortunately the latter was so placed as to be completely hid from the sight of those at the fire, and they both entered it unseen. Hastily explaining to her guest, in the best manner she could, the necessity of quitting her for a short time, Mabel, first placing the Dew-of-June in her own room, with a full certainty that she would not quit it until told to do so, went to the fire and took her seat among the rest, with all the composure it was in her power to command.

"Late come, late served, Mabel," said her uncle, between mouthfuls of broiled salmon; for though the cookery might be very unsophisticated on that remote frontier, the viands were generally delicious — "late come, late served; it is a good rule, and keeps laggards up to their work."

"I am no laggard, Uncle; for I have been stirring nearly an hour, and exploring our island."

"It's little you'll make o' that, Mistress Mabel," put in Muir; "that's little by nature. Lundie — or it might be better to style him Major Duncan in this presence" (this was said in consideration of the corporal and the common men, though they were taking their meal a little apart)—"has not added an empire to his Majesty's dominions in getting possession of this island, which is likely to equal that of the celebrated Sancho in revenues and profits — Sancho, of whom, doubtless, Master Cap, you'll often have been reading in your leisure hours, more especially in calms and moments of inactivity."

"I know the spot you mean, Quartermaster; Sancho's Island — coral rock, of new formation, and as bad a landfall, in a dark night and blowing weather, as a sinner could wish to keep clear of. It's a famous place for cocoanuts and bitter water, that Sancho's Island."

"It's no' very famous for dinners," returned Muir, repressing the smile which was struggling to his lips out of respect to Mabel; "nor do I think there'll be much to choose between its revenue and that of this spot. In my judgment, Master Cap,

this is a very unmilitary position, and I look to some calamity befalling it, sooner or later.”

“It is to be hoped not until our turn of duty is over,” observed Mabel. “I have no wish to study the French language.”

“We might think ourselves happy, did it not prove to be the Iroquois. I have reasoned with Major Duncan on the occupation of this position, but ‘a wilfu’ man maun ha’ his way.’ My first object in accompanying this party was to endeavor to make myself acceptable and useful to your beautiful niece, Master Cap; and the second was to take such an account of the stores that belong to my particular department as shall leave no question open to controversy, concerning the manner of expenditure, when they shall have disappeared by means of the enemy.”

“Do you look upon matters as so serious?” demanded Cap, actually suspending his mastication of a bit of venison — for he passed alternately from fish to flesh and back again — in the interest he took in the answer. “Is the danger pressing?”

“I’ll no’ say just that; and I’ll no’ say just the contrary. There is always danger in war, and there is more of it at the advanced posts than at the main encampment. It ought, therefore, to occasion no surprise were we to be visited by the French at any moment.”

“And what the devil is to be done in that case? Six men and two women would make but a poor job in defending such a place as this, should the enemy invade us; as, no doubt, Frenchman-like, they would take very good care to come strong-handed.”

“That we may depend on — some very formidable force at the very lowest. A military disposition might be made in defence of the island, out of all question, and according to the art of war, though we would probably fail in the force necessary to carry out the design in any very creditable manner. In the first place, a detachment should be sent off to the shore, with orders to annoy the enemy in landing; a strong party ought instantly to be thrown into the blockhouse, as the citadel, for on that all the different detachments would naturally fall back for support, as the French advanced; and an entrenched camp might be laid out around the stronghold, as it would be very unmilitary indeed to let the foe get near enough to the foot of the walls to mine them. Chevaux-de-frise would keep the cavalry in check; and as for the artillery, redoubts should be thrown up under cover of yon woods. Strong skirmishing parties, moreover, would be exceedingly serviceable in retarding the march of the enemy; and these different huts, if properly piqueted and ditched, would be converted into very eligible positions for that object.”

“Whe-e-e-w-, Quartermaster! And who the d —l is to find all the men to carry out such a plan?”

“The king, out of all question, Master Cap. It is his quarrel, and it’s just he should bear the burthen o’ it.”

“And we are only six! This is fine talking, with a vengeance. You could be sent down to the shore to oppose the landing, Mabel might skirmish with her tongue at least, the soldier’s wife might act chevaux-de-frise to entangle the cavalry, the corporal should command the entrenched camp, his three men could occupy the five huts, and I would take the blockhouse. Whe-e-e-w! you describe well, Lieutenant; and should have been a limner instead of a soldier.”

“Na, I’ve been very literal and upright in my exposition of matters. That there is no greater force here to carry out the plan is a fault of his Majesty’s ministers, and none of mine.”

“But should our enemy really appear,” asked Mabel, with more interest than she might have shown, had she not remembered the guest in the hut, “what course ought we to pursue?”

“My advice would be to attempt to achieve that, pretty Mabel, which rendered Xenophon so justly celebrated.”

“I think you mean a retreat, though I half guess at your allusion.”

“You’ve imagined my meaning from the possession of a strong native sense, young lady. I am aware that your worthy father has pointed out to the Corporal certain modes and methods by which he fancies this island could be held, in case the French should discover its position; but the excellent Sergeant, though your father, and as good a man in his duties as ever wielded a spontoon, is not the great Lord Stair, or even the Duke of Marlborough. I’ll not deny the Sergeant’s merits in his particular sphere; though I cannot exaggerate qualities, however excellent, into those of men who may be in some trifling degree his superiors. Sergeant Dunham has taken counsel of his heart, instead of his head, in resolving to issue such orders; but, if the fort fall, the blame will lie on him that ordered it to be occupied, and not on him whose duty it was to defend it. Whatever may be the determination of the latter, should the French and their allies land, a good commander never neglects the preparations necessary to effect a retreat; and I would advise Master Cap, who is the admiral of our navy, to have a boat in readiness to evacuate the island, if need comes to need. The largest boat that we have left carries a very ample sail; and by hauling it round here, and mooring it under those bushes, there will be a convenient place for a

hurried embarkation; and then you'll perceive, pretty Mabel, that it is scarcely fifty yards before we shall be in a channel between two other islands, and hid from the sight of those who may happen to be on this."

"All that you say is very true, Mr. Muir; but may not the French come from that quarter themselves? If it is so good for a retreat, it is equally good for an advance."

"They'll no' have the sense to do so discreet a thing," returned Muir, looking furtively and a little uneasily around him; "they'll no' have sufficient discretion. Your French are a head-over-heels nation, and usually come forward in a random way; so we may look for them, if they come at all, on the other side of the island."

The discourse now became exceedingly desultory, touching principally, however, on the probabilities of an invasion, and the best means of meeting it.

To most of this Mabel paid but little attention; though she felt some surprise that Lieutenant Muir, an officer whose character for courage stood well, should openly recommend an abandonment of what appeared to her to be doubly a duty, her father's character being connected with the defence of the island. Her mind, however, was so much occupied with her guest, that, seizing the first favorable moment, she left the table, and was soon in her own hut again. Carefully fastening the door, and seeing that the simple curtain was drawn before the single little window, Mabel next led the Dew-of-June, or June, as she was familiarly termed by those who spoke to her in English, into the outer room, making signs of affection and confidence.

"I am glad to see you, June," said Mabel, with one of her sweetest smiles, and in her own winning voice — "very glad to see you. What has brought you hither, and how did you discover the island?"

"Speak slow," said June, returning smile for smile, and pressing the little hand she held with one of her own that was scarcely larger, though it had been hardened by labor; "more slow — too quick."

Mabel repeated her questions, endeavoring to repress the impetuosity of her feelings; and she succeeded in speaking so distinctly as to be understood.

"June, friend," returned the Indian woman.

"I believe you, June — from my soul I believe you; what has this to do with your visit?"

"Friend come to see friend," answered June, again smiling openly in the other's face.

"There is some other reason, June, else would you never run this risk, and alone. You are alone, June?"

"June wid you, no one else. June come alone, paddle canoe."

"I hope so, I think so — nay, I know so. You would not be treacherous with me, June?"

"What treacherous?"

"You would not betray me, would not give me to the French, to the Iroquois, to Arrowhead?"

June shook her head earnestly.

"You would not sell my scalp?"

Here June passed her arm fondly around the slender waist of Mabel and pressed her to her heart with a tenderness and affection that brought tears into the eyes of our heroine. It was done in the fond caressing manner of a woman, and it was scarcely possible that it should not obtain credit for sincerity with a young and ingenuous person of the same sex. Mabel returned the pressure, and then held the other off at the length of her arm, looked her steadily in the face, and continued her inquiries.

"If June has something to tell her friend, let her speak plainly," she said. "My ears are open."

"June 'fraid Arrowhead kill her."

"But Arrowhead will never know it." Mabel's blood mounted to her temples as she said this; for she felt that she was urging a wife to be treacherous to her husband. "That is, Mabel will not tell him."

"He bury tomahawk in June's head."

"That must never be, dear June; I would rather you should say no more than run this risk."

"Blockhouse good place to sleep, good place to stay."

"Do you mean that I may save my life by keeping in the blockhouse, June? Surely, surely, Arrowhead will not hurt you for telling me that. He cannot wish me any great harm, for I never injured him."



"Arrowhead wish no harm to handsome pale-face," returned June, averting her face; and, though she always spoke in the soft, gentle voice of an Indian girl, now permitting its notes to fall so low as to cause them to sound melancholy and timid. "Arrowhead love pale-face girl."

Mabel blushed, she knew not why, and for a moment her questions were repressed by a feeling of inherent delicacy. But it was necessary to know more, for her apprehensions had been keenly awakened, and she resumed her inquiries.

"Arrowhead can have no reason to love or to hate *me*," she said. "Is he near you?"

"Husband always near wife, here," said June, laying her hand on her heart.

"Excellent creature! But tell me, June, ought I to keep in the blockhouse to-day — this morning — now?"

"Blockhouse very good; good for women. Blockhouse got no scalp."

"I fear I understand you only too well, June. Do you wish to see my father?"

"No here; gone away."

"You cannot know that, June; you see the island is full of his soldiers."

"No full; gone away," — here June held up four of her fingers — "so many red-coats."

"And Pathfinder? would you not like to see the Pathfinder? He can talk to you in the Iroquois tongue."

"Tongue gone wid him," said June, laughing; "keep tongue in his mout'."

There was something so sweet and contagious in the infantile laugh of an Indian girl, that Mabel could not refrain from joining in it, much as her fears were aroused by all that had passed.

"You appear to know, or to think you know, all about us, June. But if Pathfinder be gone, Eau-douce can speak French too. You know Eau-douce; shall I run and bring him to talk with you?"

"Eau-douce gone too, all but heart; that there." As June said this, she laughed again; looked in different directions, as if unwilling to confuse the other, and laid her hand on Mabel's bosom.

Our heroine had often heard of the wonderful sagacity of the Indians, and of the surprising manner in which they noted all things, while they appeared to regard none; but she was scarcely prepared for the direction the discourse had so singularly taken. Willing to change it, and at the same time truly anxious to learn how great the danger that impended over them might really be, she rose from the camp-stool on which she had been seated; and, by assuming an attitude of less affectionate confidence, she hoped to hear more of that she really desired to learn, and to avoid allusions to that which she found so embarrassing.

"You know how much or how little you ought to tell me, June," she said; "and I hope you love me well enough to give me the information I ought to hear. My dear uncle, too, is on the island, and you are, or ought to be, his friend as well as mine; and both of us will remember your conduct when we get back to Oswego."

"Maybe, never get back; who know?" This was said doubtingly, or as one who lays down an uncertain proposition, and not with a taunt, or a desire to alarm.

"No one knows what will happen but God. Our lives are in His hands. Still, I think you are to be His instrument in saving us."

This passed June's comprehension, and she only looked her ignorance; for it was evident she wished to be of use.

"Blockhouse very good," she repeated, as soon as her countenance ceased to express uncertainty, laying strong emphasis on the last two words.

"Well, I understand this, June, and will sleep in it to-night. Of course I am to tell my uncle what you have said?"

The Dew-of-June started, and she discovered a very manifest uneasiness at the interrogatory.

"No, no, no, no!" she answered, with a volubility and vehemence that was imitated from the French of the Canadas; "no good to tell Saltwater. He much talk and long tongue. Thinks woods all water, understand not'ing. Tell Arrowhead, and June die."

"You do my dear uncle injustice, for he would be as little likely to betray you as any one."

"No understand. Saltwater got tongue, but no eyes, no ears, no nose — not'ing but tongue, tongue, tongue!"

Although Mabel did not exactly coincide in this opinion, she saw that Cap had not the confidence of the young Indian woman, and that it was idle to expect she would consent to his being admitted to their interview.

"You appear to think you know our situation pretty well, June," Mabel continued; "have you been on the island before this visit?"

"Just come."

"How then do you know that what you say is true? My father, the Pathfinder, and Eau-douce may all be here within sound of my voice, if I choose to call them."

"All gone," said June positively, smiling good-humoredly at the same time.

"Nay, this is more than you can say certainly, not having been over the island to examine it."

"Got good eyes; see boat with men go away — see ship with Eau-douce."

"Then you have been some time watching us: I think, however, you have not counted them that remain."

June laughed, held up her four fingers again, and then pointed to her two thumbs; passing a finger over the first, she repeated the words "red-coats;" and touching the last, she added, "Saltwater," "Quartermaster." All this was being very accurate, and Mabel began to entertain serious doubts as to the propriety of her permitting her visitor to depart without her becoming more explicit. Still it was so repugnant to her feelings to abuse the confidence this gentle and affectionate creature had evidently reposed in her, that Mabel had no sooner admitted the thought of summoning her uncle, than she rejected it as unworthy of herself and unjust to her friend. To aid this good resolution, too, there was the certainty that June would reveal nothing, but take refuge in a stubborn silence, if any attempt were made to coerce her.

"You think, then, June," Mabel continued, as soon as these thoughts had passed through her mind, "that I had better live in the blockhouse?"

"Good place for woman. Blockhouse got no scalp. Logs t'ick."

"You speak confidently, June; as if you had been in it, and had measured its walls."

June laughed; and she looked knowing, though she said nothing.

"Does any one but yourself know how to find this island? Have any of the Iroquois seen it?"

June looked sad, and she cast her eyes warily about her, as if distrusting a listener.

"Tuscarora, everywhere — Oswego, here, Frontenac, Mohawk — everywhere. If he see June, kill her."

"But we thought that no one knew of this island, and that we had no reason to fear our enemies while on it."

"Much eye, Iroquois."

"Eyes will not always do, June, This spot is hid from ordinary sight, and few of even our own people know how to find it."

"One man can tell; some Yengeese talk French."

Mabel felt a chill at her heart. All the suspicions against Jasper, which she had hitherto disdained entertaining, crowded in a body on her thoughts; and the sensation that they brought was so sickening, that for an instant she imagined she was about to faint. Arousing herself, and remembering her promise to her father, she arose and walked up and down the hut for a minute, fancying that Jasper's delinquencies were naught to her, though her inmost heart yearned with the desire to think him innocent.

"I understand your meaning, June," she then said; "you wish me to know that some one has treacherously told your people where and how to find the island?"

June laughed, for in her eyes artifice in war was oftener a merit than a crime; but she was too true to her tribe herself to say more than the occasion required. Her object was to save Mabel, and Mabel only; and she saw no sufficient reason for "travelling out of the record," as the lawyers express it, in order to do anything else.

"Pale-face know now," she added. "Blockhouse good for girl, no matter for men and warriors."

"But it is much matter with me, June; for one of those men is my uncle, whom I love, and the others are my countrymen and friends. I must tell them what has passed."

"Then June be kill," returned the young Indian quietly, though she evidently spoke with concern.

"No; they shall not know that you have been here. Still, they must be on their guard, and we can all go into the blockhouse."

"Arrowhead know, see everything, and June be kill. June come to tell young pale-face friend, not to tell men. Every

warrior watch his own scalp. June woman, and tell woman; no tell men."

Mabel was greatly distressed at this declaration of her wild friend, for it was now evident the young creature understood that her communication was to go no further. She was ignorant how far these people consider the point of honor interested in her keeping the secret; and most of all was she unable to say how far any indiscretion of her own might actually commit June and endanger her life. All these considerations flashed on her mind, and reflection only rendered their influence more painful. June, too, manifestly viewed the matter gravely; for she began to gather up the different little articles she had dropped in taking Mabel's hand, and was preparing to depart. To attempt detaining her was out of the question; and to part from her, after all she had hazarded to serve her, was repugnant to all the just and kind feelings of our heroine's nature.

"June," said she eagerly, folding her arms round the gentle but uneducated being, "we are friends. From me you have nothing to fear, for no one shall know of your visit. If you could give me some signal just before the danger comes, some sign by which to know when to go into the blockhouse, how to take care of myself."

June paused, for she had been in earnest in her intention to depart; and then she said quietly, "Bring June pigeon."

"A pigeon! Where shall I find a pigeon to bring you?"

"Next hut; bring old one; June go to canoe."

"I think I understand you, June; but had I not better lead you back to the bushes, lest you meet some of the men?"

"Go out first; count men, one, two, t'ree, four, five, six"—here June held up her fingers, and laughed—"all out of the way—good; all but one, call him one side. Then sing, and fetch pigeon."

Mabel smiled at the readiness and ingenuity of the girl, and prepared to execute her requests. At the door, however, she stopped, and looked back entreatingly at the Indian woman. "Is there no hope of your telling me more, June?" she said.

"Know all now, blockhouse good, pigeon tell, Arrowhead kill."

The last words sufficed; for Mabel could not urge further communications, when her companion herself told her that the penalty of her revelations might be death by the hand of her husband. Throwing open the door, she made a sign of adieu to June, and went out of the hut. Mabel resorted to the simple expedient of the young Indian girl to ascertain the situation of the different individuals on the island. Instead of looking about her with the intention of recognizing faces and dresses, she merely counted them; and found that three still remained at the fire, while two had gone to the boat, one of whom was Mr. Muir. The sixth man was her uncle; and he was coolly arranging some fishing-tackle at no great distance from the fire. The woman was just entering her own hut; and this accounted for the whole party. Mabel now, affecting to have dropped something, returned nearly to the hut she had left, warbling an air, stooped as if to pick up some object from the ground, and hurried towards the hut June had mentioned. This was a dilapidated structure, and it had been converted by the soldiers of the last detachment into a sort of storehouse for their live stock. Among other things, it contained a few dozen pigeons, which were regaling on a pile of wheat that had been brought off from one of the farms plundered on the Canada shore. Mabel had not much difficulty in catching one of these pigeons, although they fluttered and flew about the hut with a noise like that of drums; and, concealing it in her dress, she stole back towards her own hut with the prize. It was empty; and, without doing more than cast a glance in at the door, the eager girl hurried down to the shore. She had no difficulty in escaping observation, for the trees and bushes made a complete cover to her person. At the canoe she found June, who took the pigeon, placed it in a basket of her own manufacturing, and, repeating the words, "blockhouse good," she glided out of the bushes and across the narrow passage, as noiselessly as she had come. Mabel waited some time to catch a signal of leave-taking or amity after her friend had landed, but none was given. The adjacent islands, without exception, were as quiet as if no one had ever disturbed the sublime repose of nature, and nowhere could any sign or symptom be discovered, as Mabel then thought, that might denote the proximity of the sort of danger of which June had given notice.

On returning, however, from the shore, Mabel was struck with a little circumstance, that, in an ordinary situation, would have attracted no attention, but which, now that her suspicions had been aroused, did not pass before her uneasy eye unnoticed. A small piece of red bunting, such as is used in the ensigns of ships, was fluttering at the lower branch of a small tree, fastened in a way to permit it to blow out, or to droop like a vessel's pennant.

Now that Mabel's fears were awakened, June herself could not have manifested greater quickness in analyzing facts that she believed might affect the safety of the party. She saw at a glance that this bit of cloth could be observed from an

adjacent island; that it lay so near the line between her own hut and the canoe as to leave no doubt that June had passed near it, if not directly under it; and that it might be a signal to communicate some important fact connected with the mode of attack to those who were probably lying in ambush near them. Tearing the little strip of bunting from the tree, Mabel hastened on, scarcely knowing what her duty next required of her. June might be false to her, but her manner, her looks, her affection, and her disposition as Mabel had known it in the journey, forbade the idea. Then came the allusion to Arrowhead's admiration of the pale-face beauties, some dim recollections of the looks of the Tuscarora, and a painful consciousness that few wives could view with kindness one who had estranged a husband's affections. None of these images were distinct and clear, but they rather gleamed over the mind of our heroine than rested in it, and they quickened her pulses, as they did her step, without bringing with them the prompt and clear decisions that usually followed her reflections. She had hurried onwards towards the hut occupied by the soldier's wife, intending to remove at once to the blockhouse with the woman, though she could persuade no other to follow, when her impatient walk was interrupted by the voice of Muir.

"Whither so fast, pretty Mabel?" he cried; "and why so given to solitude? The worthy Sergeant will deride my breeding, if he hear that his daughter passes the mornings alone and unattended to, though he well knows it is my ardent wish to be her slave and companion from the beginning of the year to its end."

"Surely, Mr. Muir, you must have some authority here?" Mabel suddenly arrested her steps to say. "One of your rank would be listened to, at least, by a corporal?"

"I don't know that, I don't know that," interrupted Muir, with an impatience and appearance of alarm that might have excited Mabel's attention at another moment. "Command is command; discipline, discipline; and authority, authority. Your good father would be sore grieved did he find me interfering to sully or carry off the laurels he is about to win; and I cannot command the Corporal without equally commanding the Sergeant. The wisest way will be for me to remain in the obscurity of a private individual in this enterprise; and it is so that all parties, from Lundie down, understand the transaction."

"This I know, and it may be well, nor would I give my dear father any cause of complaint; but you may influence the Corporal to his own good."

"I'll no' say that," returned Muir in his sly Scotch way; "it would be far safer to promise to influence him to his injury. Mankind, pretty Mabel, have their peculiarities; and to influence a fellow-being to his own good is one of the most difficult tasks of human nature, while the opposite is just the easiest. You'll no' forget this, my dear, but bear it in mind for your edification and government. But what is that you're twisting round your slender finger as you may be said to twist hearts?"

"It is nothing but a bit of cloth — a sort of flag — a trifle that is hardly worth our attention at this grave moment. If —"

"A trifle! It's no' so trifling as ye may imagine, Mistress Mabel," taking the bit of bunting from her, and stretching it at full length with both his arms extended, while his face grew grave and his eye watchful. "Ye'll no' ha' been finding this, Mabel Dunham, in the breakfast?"

Mabel simply acquainted him with the spot where and the manner in which she had found the bit of cloth. While she was speaking, the eye of the Quartermaster was not quiet for a moment, glancing from the rag to the face of our heroine, then back again to the rag. That his suspicions were awakened was easy to be seen, nor was he long in letting it be known what direction they had taken.

"We are not in a part of the world where our ensigns and gauds ought to be spread abroad to the wind, Mabel Dunham!" he said, with an ominous shake of the head.

"I thought as much myself, Mr. Muir, and brought away the little flag lest it might be the means of betraying our presence here to the enemy, even though nothing is intended by its display. Ought not my uncle to be made acquainted with the circumstance?"

"I no' see the necessity for that, pretty Mabel; for, as you justly say, it is a circumstance, and circumstances sometimes worry the worthy mariner. But this flag, if flag it can be called, belongs to a seaman's craft. You may perceive that it is made of what is called bunting, and that is a description of cloth used only by vessels for such purposes, *our* colors being of silk, as you may understand, or painted canvas. It's surprisingly like the fly of the *Scud's* ensign. And now I recollect me to have observed that a piece had been cut from that very flag."

Mabel felt her heart sink, but she had sufficient self-command not to attempt an answer.

"It must be looked to," Muir continued, "and, after all, I think it may be well to hold a short consultation with Master Cap, than whom a more loyal subject does not exist in the British empire."

"I have thought the warning so serious," Mabel rejoined, "that I am about to remove to the blockhouse, and to take the woman with me."

"I do not see the prudence of that, Mabel. The blockhouse will be the first spot assailed should there really be an attack; and it's no' well provided for a siege, that must be allowed. If I might advise in so delicate a contingency, I would recommend your taking refuge in the boat, which, as you may now perceive, is most favorably placed to retreat by that channel opposite, where all in it would be hid by the islands in one or two minutes. Water leaves no trail, as Pathfinder well expresses it; and there appears to be so many different passages in that quarter that escape would be more than probable. I've always been of opinion that Lundie hazarded too much in occupying a post so far advanced and so much exposed as this."

"It's too late to regret it now, Mr. Muir, and we have only to consult our own security."

"And the king's honor, pretty Mabel. Yes, his Majesty's arms and his glorious name are not to be overlooked on any occasion."

"Then I think it might be better if we all turned our eyes towards the place that has been built to maintain them instead of the boat," said Mabel, smiling; "and so, Mr. Muir, I am for the blockhouse, intending to await there the return of my father and his party. He would be sadly grieved at finding we had fled when he got back successful himself, and filled with the confidence of our having been as faithful to our duties as he has been to his own."

"Nay, nay, for heaven's sake, do not misunderstand me, Mabel!" Muir interrupted, with some alarm of manner; "I am far from intimating that any but you females ought to take refuge in the boat. The duty of us men is sufficiently plain, no doubt, and my resolution has been formed from the first to stand or fall by the blockhouse."

"And did you imagine, Mr. Muir, that two females could row that heavy boat in a way to escape the bark canoe of an Indian?"

"Ah, my pretty Mabel, love is seldom logical, and its fears and misgivings are apt to warp the faculties. I only saw your sweet person in the possession of the means of safety, and overlooked the want of ability to use them; but you'll not be so cruel, lovely creature, as to impute to me as a fault my intense anxiety on your own account."

Mabel had heard enough: her mind was too much occupied with what had passed that morning, and with her fears, to wish to linger longer to listen to love speeches, which in her most joyous and buoyant moments she would have found unpleasant. She took a hasty leave of her companion, and was about to trip away towards the hilt of the other woman, when Muir arrested the movement by laying a hand on her arm.

"One word, Mabel," said he, "before you leave me. This little flag may, or it may not, have a particular meaning; if it has, now that we are aware of its being shown, may it not be better to put it back again, while we watch vigilantly for some answer that may betray the conspiracy; and if it mean nothing, why, nothing will follow."

"This may be all right, Mr. Muir, though, if the whole is accidental, the flag might be the occasion of the fort's being discovered."

Mabel stayed to utter no more; but she was soon out of sight, running into the hut towards which she had been first proceeding. The Quartermaster remained on the very spot and in the precise attitude in which she had left him for quite a minute, first looking at the bounding figure of the girl and then at the bit of bunting, which he still held before him in a way to denote indecision. His irresolution lasted but for this minute, however; for he was soon beneath the tree, where he fastened the mimic flag to a branch again, though, from his ignorance of the precise spot from which it had been taken by Mabel, he left it fluttering from a part of the oak where it was still more exposed than before to the eyes of any passenger on the river, though less in view from the island itself.



## CHAPTER 21.

*Each one has had his supping mess,  
The cheese is put into the press,  
The pans and bowls, clean scalded all,  
Reared up against the milk-house wall.*

—COTTON.

It seemed strange to Mabel Dunham, as she passed along on her way to find her female companion, that others should be so composed, while she herself felt as if the responsibilities of life and death rested on her shoulders. It is true that distrust of June's motives mingled with her forebodings; but when she came to recall the affectionate and natural manner of the young Indian girl, and all the evidences of good faith and sincerity she had seen in her conduct during the familiar intercourse of their journey, she rejected the idea with the unwillingness of a generous disposition to believe ill of others. She saw, however, that she could not put her companions properly on their guard without letting them into the secret of her conference with June; and she found herself compelled to act cautiously and with a forethought to which she was unaccustomed, more especially in a matter of so much moment.

The soldier's wife was told to transport the necessities into the blockhouse, and admonished not to be far from it at any time during the day. Mabel did not explain her reasons. She merely stated that she had detected some signs in walking about the island, which induced her to apprehend that the enemy had more knowledge of its position than had been previously believed, and that they two at least, would do well to be in readiness to seek a refuge at the shortest notice. It was not difficult to arouse the apprehension of this person, who, though a stout-hearted Scotchwoman, was ready enough to listen to anything that confirmed her dread of Indian cruelties. As soon as Mabel believed that her companion was sufficiently frightened to make her wary, she threw out some hints touching the inexpediency of letting the soldiers know the extent of their own fears. This was done with a view to prevent discussions and inquiries that might embarrass our heroine: she determining to render her uncle, the Corporal, and his men more cautious, by adopting a different course. Unfortunately, the British army could not have furnished a worse person for the particular duty that he was now required to discharge than Corporal M'Nab, the individual who had been left in command during the absence of Sergeant Dunham. On the one hand, he was resolute, prompt, familiar with all the details of a soldier's life, and used to war; on the other, he was supercilious as regards the provincials, opinionated on every subject connected with the narrow limits of his professional practice, much disposed to fancy the British empire the centre of all that is excellent in the world, and Scotland the focus of, at least, all moral excellence in that empire. In short, he was an epitome, though on a scale suited to his rank, of those very qualities which were so peculiar to the servants of the Crown that were sent into the colonies, as these servants estimated themselves in comparison with the natives of the country; or, in other words, he considered the American as an animal inferior to the parent stock, and viewed all his notions of military service, in particular, as undigested and absurd. A more impracticable subject, therefore, could not well have offered for the purpose of Mabel, and yet she felt obliged to lose no time in putting her plan in execution.

"My father has left you a responsible command, Corporal," she said, as soon as she could catch M'Nab a little apart; "for should the island fall into the hands of the enemy, not only should we be captured, but the party that is now out would in all probability become their prisoners also."

"It needs no journey from Scotland to this place to know the facts needful to be o' that way of thinking," returned M'Nab drily.

"I do not doubt your understanding it as well as myself, Mr. M'Nab, but I'm fearful that you veterans, accustomed as you are to dangers and battles, are a little apt to overlook some of the precautions that may be necessary in a situation as peculiar as ours."

"They say Scotland is no conquered country, young woman, but I'm thinking there must be some mistak' in the matter, as we, her children, are so drowsy-headed and apt to be o'ertaken when we least expect it."

"Nay, my good friend, you mistake my meaning. In the first place, I'm not thinking of Scotland at all, but of this island; and then I am far from doubting your vigilance when you think it necessary to practise it; but my great fear is that there may be danger to which your courage will make you indifferent."

"My courage, Mistress Dunham, is doubtless of a very poor quality, being nothing but Scottish courage; your father's is Yankee, and were he here among us we should see different preparations, beyond a doubt. Well, times are getting wrong, when foreigners hold commissions and carry halberds in Scottish corps; and I no wonder that battles are lost, and campaigns go wrong end foremost."

Mabel was almost in despair; but the quiet warning of June was still too vividly impressed on her mind to allow her to yield the matter. She changed her mode of operating, therefore, still clinging to the hope of getting the whole party within the blockhouse, without being compelled to betray the source whence she obtained her notices of the necessity of vigilance.

"I daresay you are right, Corporal M'Nab," she observed; "for I've often heard of the heroes of your country, who have been among the first of the civilized world, if what they tell me of them is true."

"Have you read the history of Scotland, Mistress Dunham?" demanded the Corporal, looking up at his pretty companion, for the first time with something like a smile on his hard, repulsive countenance.

"I have read a little of it, Corporal, but I've heard much more. The lady who brought me up had Scottish blood in her veins, and was fond of the subject."

"I'll warrant ye, the Sergeant no' troubled himself to expatiate on the renown of the country where his regiment was raised?"

"My father has other things to think of, and the little I know was got from the lady I have mentioned."

"She'll no' be forgetting to tell ye o' Wallace?"

"Of him I've even read a good deal."

"And o' Bruce, and the affair of Bannockburn?"

"Of that too, as well as of Culloden Muir."

The last of these battles was then a recent event, it having actually been fought within the recollection of our heroine, whose notions of it, however, were so confused that she scarcely appreciated the effect her allusion might produce on her companion. She knew it had been a victory, and had often heard the guests of her patroness mention it with triumph; and she fancied their feelings would find a sympathetic chord in those of every British soldier. Unfortunately, M'Nab had fought throughout that luckless day on the side of the Pretender; and a deep scar that garnished his face had been left there by the sabre of a German soldier in the service of the House of Hanover. He fancied that his wound bled afresh at Mabel's allusion; and it is certain that the blood rushed to his face in a torrent, as if it would pour out of his skin at the cicatrix.

"Hoot! hoot awa'!" he fairly shouted, "with your Culloden and Sherriff muirs, young woman; ye'll no' be understanding the subject at all, and will manifest not only wisdom but modesty in speaking o' your ain country and its many failings. King George has some loyal subjects in the colonies, na doubt, but 'twill be a lang time before he sees or hears any guid of them."

Mabel was surprised at the Corporal's heat, for she had not the smallest idea where the shoe pinched; but she was determined not to give up the point.

"I've always heard that the Scotch had two of the good qualities of soldiers," she said, "courage and circumspection; and I feel persuaded that Corporal M'Nab will sustain the national renown."

"Ask yer own father, Mistress Dunham; he is acquaint' with Corporal M'Nab, and will no' be backward to point out his demerits. We have been in battle thegither, and he is my superior officer, and has a sort o' official right to give the characters of his subordinates."

"My father thinks well of you, M'Nab, or he would not have left you in charge of this island and all it contains, his own daughter included. Among other things, I well know that he calculates largely on your prudence. He expects the blockhouse in particular to be strictly attended to."

"If he wishes to defend the honor of the 55th behind logs, he ought to have remained in command himself; for, to speak frankly, it goes against a Scotchman's bluid and opinions to be beaten out of the field even before he is attacked. We are broadsword men, and love to stand foot to foot with the foe. This American mode of fighting, that is getting into so much favor, will destroy the reputation of his Majesty's army, if it no' destroy its spirit."

"No true soldier despises caution. Even Major Duncan himself, than whom there is none braver, is celebrated for his care of his men."

“Lundie has his weakness, and is fast forgetting the broadsword and open heaths in his tree and rifle practice. But, Mistress Dunham, tak’ the word of an old soldier, who has seen his fifty-fifth year, when he tells ye that there is no surer method to encourage your enemy than to seem to fear him; and that there is no danger in this Indian warfare that the fancies and imaginations of your Americans have not enlarged upon, until they see a savage in every bush. We Scots come from a naked region, and have no need and less relish for covers, and so ye’ll be seeing, Mistress Dunham —”

The Corporal gave a spring into the air, fell forward on his face, and rolled over on his back, the whole passing so suddenly that Mabel had scarcely heard the sharp crack of the rifle that had sent a bullet through his body. Our heroine did not shriek — did not even tremble; for the occurrence was too sudden, too awful, and too unexpected for that exhibition of weakness; on the contrary, she stepped hastily forward, with a natural impulse to aid her companion. There was just enough of life left in M’Nab to betray his entire consciousness of all that had passed. His countenance had the wild look of one who had been overtaken by death by surprise; and Mabel, in her cooler moments, fancied that it showed the tardy repentance of a willful and obstinate sinner.

“Ye’ll be getting into the blockhouse as fast as possible,” M’Nab whispered, as Mabel leaned over him to catch his dying words.

Then came over our heroine the full consciousness of her situation and of the necessity of exertion. She cast a rapid glance at the body at her feet, saw that it had ceased to breathe, and fled. It was but a few minutes’ run to the blockhouse, the door of which Mabel had barely gained when it was closed violently in her face by Jennie, the soldier’s wife, who in blind terror thought only of her own safety. The reports of five or six rifles were heard while Mabel was calling out for admittance; and the additional terror they produced prevented the woman within from undoing quickly the very fastenings she had been so expert in applying. After a minute’s delay, however, Mabel found the door reluctantly yielding to her constant pressure, and she forced her slender body through the opening the instant it was large enough to allow of its passage. By this time Mabel’s heart ceased to beat tumultuously and she gained sufficient self-command to act collectedly. Instead of yielding to the almost convulsive efforts of her companion to close the door again, she held it open long enough to ascertain that none of her own party was in sight, or likely on the instant to endeavor to gain admission: then she allowed the opening to be shut. Her orders and proceedings now became more calm and rational. But a single bar was crossed, and Jennie was directed to stand in readiness to remove even that at any application from a friend. She then ascended the ladder to the room above, where by means of a loophole she was enabled to get as good a view of the island as the surrounding bushes would allow. Admonishing her associate below to be firm and steady, she made as careful an examination of the environs as her situation permitted.

To her great surprise, Mabel could not at first see a living soul on the island, friend or enemy. Neither Frenchman nor Indian was visible, though a small straggling white cloud that was floating before the wind told her in which quarter she ought to look for them. The rifles had been discharged from the direction of the island whence June had come, though whether the enemy were on that island, or had actually landed on her own, Mabel could not say. Going to the loop that commanded a view of the spot where M’Nab lay, her blood curdled at perceiving all three of his soldiers lying apparently lifeless at his side. These men had rushed to a common centre at the first alarm, and had been shot down almost simultaneously by the invisible foe whom the Corporal had affected to despise.

Neither Cap nor Lieutenant Muir was to be seen. With a beating heart, Mabel examined every opening through the trees, and ascended even to the upper story or garret of the blockhouse, where she got a full view of the whole island, so far as its covers would allow, but with no better success. She had expected to see the body of her uncle lying on the grass like those of the soldiers, but it was nowhere visible. Turning towards the spot where the boat lay, Mabel saw that it was still fastened to the shore; and then she supposed that by some accident Muir had been prevented from effecting his retreat in that quarter. In short, the island lay in the quiet of the grave, the bodies of the soldiers rendering the scone as fearful as it was extraordinary.

“For God’s holy sake, Mistress Mabel,” called out the woman from below; for, though her fear had become too ungovernable to allow her to keep silence, our heroine’s superior refinement, more than the regimental station of her father, still controlled her mode of address — “Mistress Mabel, tell me if any of our friends are living! I think I hear groans that grow fainter and fainter, and fear that they will all be tomahawked!”

Mabel now remembered that one of the soldiers was this woman’s husband, and she trembled at what might be the immediate effect of her sorrow, should his death become suddenly known to her. The groans, too, gave a little hope,



though she feared they might come from her uncle, who lay out of view.

"We are in His holy keeping, Jennie," she answered. "We must trust in Providence, while we neglect none of its benevolent means of protecting ourselves. Be careful with the door; on no account open it without my directions."

"Oh, tell me, Mistress Mabel, if you can anywhere see Sandy! If I could only let him know that I'm in safety, the guid man would be easier in his mind, whether free or a prisoner."

Sandy was Jennie's husband, and he lay dead in plain view of the loop from which our heroine was then looking.

"You no' tell me if you're seein' of Sandy," the woman repeated from below, impatient at Mabel's silence.

"There are some of our people gathered about the body of M'Nab," was the answer; for it seemed sacrilegious in her eyes to tell a direct untruth under the awful circumstances in which she was placed.

"Is Sandy among them?" demanded the woman, in a voice that sounded appalling by its hoarseness and energy.

"He may be certainly; for I see one, two, three, four, and all in the scarlet coats of the regiment."

"Sandy!" called out the woman frantically; "why d'ye no' care for yoursal', Sandy? Come hither the instant, man, and share your wife's fortunes in weal or woe. It's no' a moment for your silly discipline and vain-glorious notions of honor! Sandy! Sandy!"

Mabel heard the bar turn, and then the door creaked on its hinges. Expectation, not to say terror, held her in suspense at the loop, and she soon beheld Jennie rushing through the bushes in the direction of the cluster of the dead. It took the woman but an instant to reach the fatal spot. So sudden and unexpected had been the blow, that she in her terror did not appear to comprehend its weight. Some wild and half-frantic notion of a deception troubled her fancy, and she imagined that the men were trifling with her fears. She took her husband's hand, and it was still warm, while she thought a covert smile was struggling on his lip.

"Why will ye fool life away, Sandy?" she cried, pulling at the arm. "Ye'll all be murdered by these accursed Indians, and you no' takin' to the block like trusty soldiers! Awa'! awa'! and no' be losing the precious moments."

In her desperate efforts, the woman pulled the body of her husband in a way to cause the head to turn completely over, when the small hole in the temple, caused by the entrance of a rifle bullet, and a few drops of blood trickling over the skin, revealed the meaning of her husband's silence. As the horrid truth flashed in its full extent on her mind, the woman clasped her hands, gave a shriek that pierced the glades of every island near, and fell at length on the dead body of the soldier. Thrilling, heartreaching, appalling as was that shriek, it was melody to the cry that followed it so quickly as to blend the sounds. The terrific war-whoop arose out of the covers of the island, and some twenty savages, horrible in their paint and the other devices of Indian ingenuity, rushed forward, eager to secure the coveted scalps. Arrowhead was foremost, and it was his tomahawk that brained the insensible Jennie; and her reeking hair was hanging at his girdle as a trophy in less than two minutes after she had quitted the blockhouse. His companions were equally active, and M'Nab and his soldiers no longer presented the quiet aspect of men who slumbered. They were left in their gore, unequivocally butchered corpses.

All this passed in much less time than has been required to relate it, and all this did Mabel witness. She had stood riveted to the spot, gazing on the whole horrible scene, as if enchained by some charm, nor did the idea of self or of her own danger once obtrude itself on her thoughts. But no sooner did she perceive the place where the men had fallen covered with savages, exulting in the success of their surprise, than it occurred to her that Jennie had left the blockhouse door unbarred. Her heart beat violently, for that defence alone stood between her and immediate death, and she sprang toward the ladder with the intention of descending to make sure of it. Her foot had not yet reached the floor of the second story, however, when she heard the door grating on its hinges, and she gave herself up for lost. Sinking on her knees, the terrified but courageous girl endeavored to prepare herself for death, and to raise her thoughts to God. The instinct of life, however, was too strong for prayer, and while her lips moved, the jealous senses watched every sound beneath. When her ears heard the bars, which went on pivots secured to the centre of the door, turning into their fastenings, not one, as she herself had directed, with a view to admit her uncle should he apply, but all three, she started again to her feet, all spiritual contemplations vanishing in her actual temporal condition, and it seemed as if all her faculties were absorbed in the sense of hearing.

The thoughts are active in a moment so fearful. At first Mabel fancied that her uncle had entered the blockhouse, and she was about to descend the ladder and throw herself into his arms; then the idea that it might be an Indian, who had

barred the door to shut out intruders while he plundered at leisure, arrested the movement. The profound stillness below was unlike the bold, restless movements of Cap, and it seemed to savor more of the artifices of an enemy. If a friend at all, it could only be her uncle or the Quartermaster; for the horrible conviction now presented itself to our heroine that to these two and herself were the whole party suddenly reduced, if, indeed, the two latter survived. This consideration held Mabel in check, and for full two minutes more a breathless silence reigned in the building. During this time the girl stood at the foot of the upper ladder, the trap which led to the lower opening on the opposite side of the floor; the eyes of Mabel were riveted on this spot, for she now began to expect to see at each instant the horrible sight of a savage face at the hole. This apprehension soon became so intense, that she looked about her for a place of concealment. The procrastination of the catastrophe she now fully expected, though it were only for a moment, afforded a relief. The room contained several barrels; and behind two of these Mabel crouched, placing her eyes at an opening by which she could still watch the trap. She made another effort to pray; but the moment was too horrible for that relief. She thought, too, that she heard a low rustling, as if one were ascending the lower ladder with an effort at caution so great as to betray itself by its own excess; then followed a creaking that she was certain came from one of the steps of the ladder, which had made the same noise under her own light weight as she ascended. This was one of those instants into which are compressed the sensations of years of ordinary existence. Life, death, eternity, and extreme bodily pain were all standing out in bold relief from the plane of every-day occurrences; and she might have been taken at that moment for a beautiful pallid representation of herself, equally without motion and without vitality. But while such was the outward appearance of the form, never had there been a time in her brief career when Mabel heard more acutely, saw more clearly, or felt more vividly. As yet, nothing was visible at the trap, but her ears, rendered exquisitely sensitive by intense feeling, distinctly acquainted her that some one was within a few inches of the opening in the floor. Next followed the evidence of her eyes, which beheld the dark hair of an Indian rising so slowly through the passage that the movements of the head might be likened to that of the minute-hand of a clock; then came the dark skin and wild features, until the whole of the swarthy face had risen above the floor. The human countenance seldom appears to advantage when partially concealed; and Mabel imagined many additional horrors as she first saw the black, roving eyes and the expression of wildness as the savage countenance was revealed, as it might be, inch by inch; but when the entire head was raised above the floor, a second and a better look assured our heroine that she saw the gentle, anxious, and even handsome face of June.



## CHAPTER 22.

*Spectre though I be,  
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;  
But in reward of thy fidelity.*

—WORDSWORTH.

It would be difficult to say which evinced the most satisfaction, when Mabel sprang to her feet and appeared in the centre of the room, our heroine, on finding that her visitor was the wife of Arrowhead, and not Arrowhead himself, or June, at discovering that her advice had been followed, and that the blockhouse contained the person she had so anxiously and almost hopelessly sought. They embraced each other, and the unsophisticated Tuscarora woman laughed in her sweet accents as she held her friend at arm's length, and made certain of her presence.

"Blockhouse good," said the young Indian; "got no scalp."

"It is indeed good, June," Mabel answered, with a shudder, veiling her eyes at the same time, as if to shut out a view of the horrors she had so lately witnessed. "Tell me, for God's sake, if you know what has become of my dear uncle! I have looked in all directions without being able to see him."

"No here in blockhouse?" June asked, with some curiosity.

"Indeed he is not: I am quite alone in this place; Jennie, the woman who was with me, having rushed out to join her husband, and perishing for her imprudence."

"June know, June see; very bad, Arrowhead no feel for any wife; no feel for his own."

"Ah, June, your life, at least, is safe!"

"Don't know; Arrowhead kill me, if he know all."

"God bless and protect you, June! He *will* bless and protect you for this humanity. Tell me what is to be done, and if my poor uncle is still living?"

"Don't know. Saltwater has boat; maybe he go on river."

"The boat is still on the shore, but neither my uncle nor the Quartermaster is anywhere to be seen."

"No kill, or June would see. Hide away! Red man hide; no shame for pale-face."

"It is not the shame that I fear for them, but the opportunity. Your attack was awfully sudden, June!"

"Tuscarora!" returned the other, smiling with exultation at the dexterity of her husband. "Arrowhead great warrior!"

"You are too good and gentle for this sort of life, June; you cannot be happy in such scenes?"

June's countenance grew clouded, and Mabel fancied there was some of the savage fire of a chief in her frown as she answered —

"Yengeese too greedy, take away all hunting-grounds; chase Six Nation from morning to night; wicked king, wicked people. Pale-face very bad."

Mabel knew that, even in that distant day, there was much truth in this opinion, though she was too well instructed not to understand that the monarch, in this, as in a thousand other cases, was blamed for acts of which he was most probably ignorant. She felt the justice of the rebuke, therefore, too much to attempt an answer, and her thoughts naturally reverted to her own situation.

"And what am I to do, June?" she demanded. "It cannot be long before your people will assault this building."

"Blockhouse good — got no scalp."

"But they will soon discover that it has got no garrison too, if they do not know it already. You yourself told me the number of people that were on the island, and doubtless you learned it from Arrowhead."

"Arrowhead know," answered June, holding up six fingers, to indicate the number of the men. "All red men know. Four lose scalp already; two got 'em yet."

"Do not speak of it, June; the horrid thought curdles my blood. Your people cannot know that I am alone in the blockhouse, but may fancy my uncle and the Quartermaster with me, and may set fire to the building, in order to dislodge them. They tell me that fire is the great danger to such places."

"No burn blockhouse," said June quietly.

"You cannot know that, my good June, and I have no means to keep them off."

"No burn blockhouse. Blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"But tell me why, June; I fear they will burn it."

"Blockhouse wet — much rain — logs green — no burn easy. Red man know it — fine t'ing — then no burn it to tell Yengeese that Iroquois been here. Fader come back, miss blockhouse, no found. No, no; Indian too much cunning; no touch anything."

"I understand you, June, and hope your prediction may be true; for, as regards my dear father, should he escape — perhaps he is already dead or captured, June?"

"No touch fader — don't know where he gone — water got no trail — red man can't follow. No burn blockhouse — blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"Do you think it possible for me to remain here safely until my father returns?"

"Don't know; daughter tell best when fader come back." Mabel felt uneasy at the glance of June's dark eye as she uttered this; for the unpleasant surmise arose that her companion was endeavoring to discover a fact that might be useful to her own people, while it would lead to the destruction of her parent and his party. She was about to make an evasive answer, when a heavy push at the outer door suddenly drew all her thoughts to the immediate danger.

"They come!" she exclaimed. "Perhaps, June, it is my uncle or the Quartermaster. I cannot keep out even Mr. Muir at a moment like this."

"Why no look? plenty loophole, made purpose."

Mabel took the hint, and, going to one of the downward loops, that had been cut through the logs in the part that overhung the basement, she cautiously raised the little block that ordinarily filled the small hole, and caught a glance at what was passing at the door. The start and changing countenance told her companion that some of her own people were below.

"Red man," said June, lifting a finger in admonition to be prudent.

"Four; and horrible in their paint and bloody trophies. Arrowhead is among them."

June had moved to a corner, where several spare rifles had been deposited, and had already taken one into her hand, when the name of her husband appeared to arrest her movements. It was but for an instant, however, for she immediately went to the loop, and was about to thrust the muzzle of the piece through it, when a feeling of natural aversion induced Mabel to seize her arm.

"No, no, no, June!" said the latter; "not against your own husband, though my life be the penalty."

"No hurt Arrowhead," returned June, with a slight shudder, "no hurt red man at all. No fire at 'em; only scare."

Mabel now comprehended the intention of June, and no longer opposed it. The latter thrust the muzzle of the rifle through the loophole; and, taking care to make noise enough to attract attention, she pulled the trigger. The piece had no sooner been discharged than Mabel reproached her friend for the very act that was intended to serve her.

"You declared it was not your intention to fire," she said, "and you may have destroyed your own husband."

"All run away before I fire," returned June, laughing, and going to another loop to watch the movements of her friends, laughing still heartier. "See! get cover — every warrior. Think Saltwater and Quartermaster here. Take good care now."

"Heaven be praised! And now, June, I may hope for a little time to compose my thoughts to prayer, that I may not die like Jennie, thinking only of life and the things of the world."

June laid aside the rifle, and came and seated herself near the box on which Mabel had sunk, under that physical reaction which accompanies joy as well as sorrow. She looked steadily in our heroine's face, and the latter thought that her countenance had an expression of severity mingled with its concern.

"Arrowhead great warrior," said the Tuscarora's wife. "All the girls of tribe look at him much. The pale-face beauty has eyes too?"

"June! — what do these words — that look — imply? what would you say?"

"Why you so 'fraid June shoot Arrowhead?"

"Would it not have been horrible to see a wife destroy her own husband? No, June, rather would I have died myself."

"Very sure, dat all?"

"That was all, June, as God is my judge! — and surely that was enough. No, no! there have been sufficient horrors to-day, without increasing them by an act like this. What other motive can you suspect?"

"Don't know. Poor Tuscarora girl very foolish. Arrowhead great chief, and look all round him. Talk of pale-face beauty in his sleep. Great chief like many wives."

"Can a chief possess more than one wife, June, among your people?"

"Have as many as he can keep. Great hunter marry often. Arrowhead got only June now; but he look too much, see too much, talk too much of pale-face girl."

Mabel was conscious of this fact, which had distressed her not a little, in the course of their journey; but it shocked her to hear this allusion, coming, as it did, from the mouth of the wife herself. She knew that habit and opinions made great differences in such matters; but, in addition to the pain and mortification she experienced at being the unwilling rival of a wife, she felt an apprehension that jealousy would be but an equivocal guarantee for her personal safety in her present situation. A closer look at June, however, reassured her; for, while it was easy to trace in the unpractised features of this unsophisticated being the pain of blighted affections, no distrust could have tortured the earnest expression of her honest countenance into that of treachery or hate.

"You will not betray me, June?" Mabel said, pressing the other's hand, and yielding to an impulse of generous confidence. "You will not give up one of your own sex to the tomahawk?"

"No tomahawk touch you. Arrowhead no let 'em. If June must have sister-wife, love to have you."

"No, June; my religion, my feelings, both forbid it; and, if I could be the wife of an Indian at all, I would never take the place that is yours in a wigwam."

June made no answer, but she looked gratified, and even grateful. She knew that few, perhaps no Indian girl within the circle of Arrowhead's acquaintance, could compare with herself in personal attractions; and, though it might suit her husband to marry a dozen wives, she knew of no one, beside Mabel, whose influence she could really dread. So keen an interest, however, had she taken in the beauty, winning manners, kindness, and feminine gentleness of our heroine, that when jealousy came to chill these feelings, it had rather lent strength to that interest; and, under its wayward influence, had actually been one of the strongest of the incentives that had induced her to risk so much in order to save her imaginary rival from the consequences of the attack that she so well knew was about to take place. In a word, June, with a wife's keenness of perception, had detected Arrowhead's admiration of Mabel; and, instead of feeling that harrowing jealousy that might have rendered her rival hateful, as would have been apt to be the case with a woman unaccustomed to defer to the superior rights of the lordly sex, she had studied the looks and character of the pale-face beauty, until, meeting with nothing to repel her own feelings, but everything to encourage them, she had got to entertain an admiration and love for her, which, though certainly very different, was scarcely less strong than that of her husband's. Arrowhead himself had sent her to warn Mabel of the coming danger, though he was ignorant that she had stolen upon the island in the rear of the assailants, and was now intrenched in the citadel along with the object of their joint care. On the contrary, he supposed, as his wife had said, that Cap and Muir were in the blockhouse with Mabel, and that the attempt to repel him and his companions had been made by the men.

"June sorry the Lily" — for so the Indian, in her poetical language, had named our heroine — "June sorry the Lily no marry Arrowhead. His wigwam big, and a great chief must get wives enough to fill it."

"I thank you, June, for this preference, which is not according to the notion of us white women," returned Mabel, smiling in spite of the fearful situation in which she was placed; "but I may not, probably never shall, marry at all."

"Must have good husband," said June; "marry Eau-douce, if don't like Arrowhead."

"June! this is not a fit subject for a girl who scarcely knows if she is to live another hour or not. I would obtain some signs of my dear uncle's being alive and safe, if possible."

"June go see."

"Can you? — will you? — would it be safe for you to be seen on the island? is your presence known to the warriors, and would they be pleased to find a woman on the war-path with them?"

All this Mabel asked in rapid connection, fearing that the answer might not be as she wished. She had thought it extraordinary that June should be of the party, and, improbable as it seemed, she had fancied that the woman had covertly followed the Iroquois in her own canoe, and had got in their advance, merely to give her the notice which had probably saved her life. But in all this she was mistaken, as June, in her imperfect manner, now found means to let her know.

Arrowhead, though a chief, was in disgrace with his own people, and was acting with the Iroquois temporarily, though with a perfect understanding. He had a wigwam, it is true, but was seldom in it; feigning friendship for the English, he had passed the summer ostensibly in their service, while he was, in truth, acting for the French, and his wife journeyed with him in his many migrations, most of the distances being passed over in canoes. In a word, her presence was no secret, her husband seldom moving without her. Enough of this to embolden Mabel to wish that her friend might go out, to ascertain the fate of her uncle, did June succeed in letting the other know; and it was soon settled between them that the Indian woman should quit the blockhouse with that object the moment a favorable opportunity offered.

They first examined the island, as thoroughly as their position would allow, from the different loops, and found that its conquerors were preparing for a feast, having seized upon the provisions of the English and rifled the huts. Most of the stores were in the blockhouse; but enough were found outside to reward the Indians for an attack that had been attended by so little risk. A party had already removed the dead bodies, and Mabel saw that their arms were collected in a pile near the spot chosen for the banquet. June suggested that, by some signs which she understood, the dead themselves were carried into a thicket and either buried or concealed from view. None of the more prominent objects on the island, however, were disturbed, it being the desire of the conquerors to lure the party of the Sergeant into an ambush on its return. June made her companion observe a man in a tree, a look-out, as she said, to give timely notice of the approach of any boat, although, the departure of the expedition being so recent, nothing but some unexpected event would be likely to bring it back so soon. There did not appear to be any intention to attack the blockhouse immediately; but every indication, as understood by June, rather showed that it was the intention of the Indians to keep it besieged until the return of the Sergeant's party, lest, the signs of an assault should give a warning to eyes as practised as those of Pathfinder. The boat, however, had been secured, and was removed to the spot where the canoes of the Indians were hid in the bushes.

June now announced her intention to join her friends, the moment being particularly favorable for her to quit the blockhouse. Mabel felt some distrust as they descended the ladder; but at the next instant she was ashamed of the feeling, as unjust to her companion and unworthy of herself, and by the time they both stood on the ground her confidence was restored. The process of unbarring the door was conducted with the utmost caution, and when the last bar was ready to be turned June took her station near the spot where the opening must necessarily be. The bar was just turned free of the brackets, the door was opened merely wide enough to allow her body to pass, and June glided through the space. Mabel closed the door again, with a convulsive movement; and as the bar turned into its place, her heart beat audibly. She then felt secure; and the two other bars were turned down in a more deliberate manner. When all was fast again, she ascended to the first floor, where alone she could get a glimpse of what was going on without.

Long and painfully melancholy hours passed, during which Mabel had no intelligence from June. She heard the yells of the savages, for liquor had carried them beyond the bounds of precaution; and occasionally caught glimpses of their mad orgies through the loops; and at all times was conscious of their fearful presence by sounds and sights that would have chilled the blood of one who had not so lately witnessed scenes so much more terrible. Toward the middle of the day, she fancied she saw a white man on the island, though his dress and wild appearance at first made her take him for a newly-arrived savage. A view of his face, although it was swarthy naturally, and much darkened by exposure, left no doubt that her conjecture was true; and she felt as if there was now one of a species more like her own present, and one to whom she might appeal for succor in the last emergency. Mabel little knew, alas! how small was the influence exercised by the whites over their savage allies, when the latter had begun to taste of blood; or how slight, indeed, was the disposition to divert them from their cruelties.

The day seemed a month by Mabel's computation, and the only part of it that did not drag were the minutes spent in prayer. She had recourse to this relief from time to time; and at each effort she found her spirit firmer, her mind more tranquil, and her resignation more confirmed. She understood the reasoning of June, and believed it highly probable that the blockhouse would be left unmolested until the return of her father, in order to entice him into an ambuscade, and she felt much less apprehension of immediate danger in consequence; but the future offered little ground of hope, and her thoughts had already begun to calculate the chances of her captivity. At such moments, Arrowhead and his offensive

admiration filled a prominent place in the background: for our heroine well knew that the Indians usually carried off to their villages, for the purposes of adoption, such captives as they did not slay; and that many instances had occurred in which individuals of her sex had passed the remainder of their lives in the wigwams of their conquerors. Such thoughts as these invariably drove her to her knees and to her prayers.

While the light lasted the situation of our heroine was sufficiently alarming; but as the shades of evening gradually gathered over the island, it became fearfully appalling. By this time the savages had wrought themselves up to the point of fury, for they had possessed themselves of all the liquor of the English; and their outcries and gesticulations were those of men truly possessed by evil spirits. All the efforts of their French leader to restrain them were entirely fruitless, and he had wisely withdrawn to an adjacent island, where he had a sort of bivouac, that he might keep at a safe distance from friends so apt to run into excesses. Before quitting the spot, however, this officer, at great risk to his own life, had succeeded in extinguishing the fire, and in securing the ordinary means to relight it. This precaution he took lest the Indians should burn the blockhouse, the preservation of which was necessary to the success of his future plans. He would gladly have removed all the arms also, but this he found impracticable, the warriors clinging to their knives and tomahawks with the tenacity of men who regarded a point of honor as long as a faculty was left; and to carry off the rifles, and leave behind him the very weapons that were generally used on such occasions, would have been an idle expedient. The extinguishing of the fire proved to be the most prudent measure; for no sooner was the officer's back turned than one of the warriors in fact proposed to fire the blockhouse. Arrowhead had also withdrawn from the group of drunkards as soon as he found that they were losing their senses, and had taken possession of a hut, where he had thrown himself on the straw, and sought the rest that two wakeful and watchful nights had rendered necessary. It followed that no one was left among the Indians to care for Mabel, if, indeed, any knew of her existence at all; and the proposal of the drunkard was received with yells of delight by eight or ten more as much intoxicated and habitually as brutal as himself.

This was the fearful moment for Mabel. The Indians, in their present condition, were reckless of any rifles that the blockhouse might hold, though they did retain dim recollections of its containing living beings, an additional incentive to their enterprise; and they approached its base whooping and leaping like demons. As yet they were excited, not overcome by the liquor they had drunk. The first attempt was made at the door, against which they ran in a body; but the solid structure, which was built entirely of logs, defied their efforts. The rush of a hundred men with the same object would have been useless. This Mabel, however, did not know; and her heart seemed to leap into her mouth as she heard the heavy shock at each renewed effort. At length, when she found that the door resisted these assaults as if it were of stone, neither trembling nor yielding, and only betraying its not being a part of the wall by rattling a little on its heavy hinges, her courage revived, and she seized the first moment of a cessation to look down through the loop, in order, if possible, to learn the extent of her danger. A silence, for which it was not easy to account, stimulated her curiosity; for nothing is so alarming to those who are conscious of the presence of imminent danger, as to be unable to trace its approach.

Mabel found that two or three of the Iroquois had been raking the embers, where they had found a few small coals, and with these they were endeavoring to light a fire. The interest with which they labored, the hope of destroying, and the force of habit, enabled them to act intelligently and in unison, so long as their fell object was kept in view. A white man would have abandoned the attempt to light a fire in despair, with coals that came out of the ashes resembling sparks; but these children of the forest had many expedients that were unknown to civilization. By the aid of a few dry leaves, which they alone knew where to seek, a blaze was finally kindled, and then the addition of a few light sticks made sure of the advantage that had been obtained. When Mabel stooped down over the loop, the Indians were making a pile of brush against the door, and as she remained gazing at their proceedings, she saw the twigs ignite, the flame dart from branch to branch, until the whole pile was cracking and snapping under a bright blaze. The Indians now gave a yell of triumph, and returned to their companions, well assured that the work of destruction was commenced. Mabel remained looking down, scarcely able to tear herself away from the spot, so intense and engrossing was the interest she felt in the progress of the fire. As the pile kindled throughout, however, the flames mounted, until they flashed so near her eyes as to compel her to retreat. Just as she reached the opposite side of the room, to which she had retired in her alarm, a forked stream shot up through the loophole, the lid of which she had left open, and illuminated the rude apartment, with Mabel and her desolation. Our heroine now naturally enough supposed that her hour was come; for the door, the only means of retreat, had been blocked up by the brush and fire, with hellish ingenuity, and she addressed herself, as she believed, for the last time to her Maker in prayer. Her eyes were closed, and for more than a minute her spirit was abstracted; but the interests

of the world too strongly divided her feelings to be altogether suppressed; and when they involuntarily opened again, she perceived that the streak of flame was no longer flaring in the room, though the wood around the little aperture had kindled, and the blaze was slowly mounting under the impulsion of a current of air that sucked inward. A barrel of water stood in a corner; and Mabel, acting more by instinct than by reason, caught up a vessel, filled it, and, pouring it on the wood with a trembling hand, succeeded in extinguishing the fire at that particular spot. The smoke prevented her from looking down again for a couple of minutes; but when she did her heart beat high with delight and hope at finding that the pile of blazing brush had been overturned and scattered, and that water had been thrown on the logs of the door, which were still smoking though no longer burning.

"Who is there?" said Mabel, with her mouth at the loop. "What friendly hand has a merciful Providence sent to my succor?"

A light footstep was audible below, and one of those gentle pushes at the door was heard, which just moved the massive beams on the hinges.

"Who wishes to enter? Is it you, dear, dear uncle?"

"Saltwater no here. St. Lawrence sweet water," was the answer. "Open quick; want to come in."

The step of Mabel was never lighter, or her movements more quick and natural, than while she was descending the ladder and turning the bars, for all her motions were earnest and active. This time she thought only of her escape, and she opened the door with a rapidity which did not admit of caution. Her first impulse was to rush into the open air, in the blind hope of quitting the blockhouse; but June repulsed the attempt, and entering, she coolly barred the door again before she would notice Mabel's eager efforts to embrace her.

"Bless you! bless you, June!" cried our heroine most fervently; "you are sent by Providence to be my guardian angel!"

"No hug so tight," answered the Tuscarora woman. "Pale-face woman all cry, or all laugh. Let June fasten door."

Mabel became more rational, and in a few minutes the two were again in the upper room, seated as before, hand in hand, all feeling of distrust between them being banished.

"Now tell me, June," Mabel commenced as soon as she had given and received one warm embrace, "have you seen or heard aught of my poor uncle?"

"Don't know. No one see him; no one hear him; no one know anyt'ing. Saltwater run into river, I t'ink, for I no find him. Quartermaster gone too. I look, and look, and look; but no see' em, one, t'other, nowhere."

"Blessed be God! They must have escaped, though the means are not known to us. I thought I saw a Frenchman on the island, June."

"Yes: French captain come, but he go away too. Plenty of Indian on island."

"Oh, June, June, are there no means to prevent my beloved father from falling into the hands of his enemies?"

"Don't know; t'ink dat warriors wait in ambush, and Yengeese must lose scalp."

"Surely, surely, June, you, who have done so much for the daughter, will not refuse to help the father?"

"Don't know fader, don't love fader. June help her own people, help Arrowhead — husband love scalp."

"June, this is not yourself. I cannot, will not believe that you wish to see our men murdered!"

June turned her dark eyes quietly on Mabel; and for a moment her look was stern, though it was soon changed into one of melancholy compassion.

"Lily, Yengeese girl?" she said, as one asks a question.

"Certainly, and as a Yengeese girl I would save my countrymen from slaughter."

"Very good, if can. June no Yengeese, June Tuscarora — got Tuscarora husband — Tuscarora heart — Tuscarora feeling — all over Tuscarora. Lily wouldn't run and tell French that her fader was coming to gain victory?"

"Perhaps not," returned Mabel, pressing a hand on a brain that felt bewildered — "perhaps not; but you serve me, aid me — have saved me, June! Why have you done this, if you only feel as a Tuscarora?"

"Don't only feel as Tuscarora; feel as girl, feel as squaw. Love pretty Lily, and put it in my bosom."

Mabel melted into tears, and she pressed the affectionate creature to her heart. It was near a minute before she could renew the discourse, but then she succeeded in speaking more calmly and with greater coherence.



"Let me know the worst, June," said she. "To-night your people are feasting; what do they intend to do to-morrow?"

"Don't know; afraid to see Arrowhead, afraid to ask question; t'ink hide away till Yengeese come back."

"Will they not attempt anything against the blockhouse? You have seen what they can threaten if they will."

"Too much rum. Arrowhead sleep, or no dare; French captain gone away, or no dare. All go to sleep now."

"And you think I am safe for this night, at least?"

"Too much rum. If Lily like June, might do much for her people."

"I am like you, June, if a wish to serve my countrymen can make a resemblance with one as courageous as yourself."

"No, no, no!" muttered June in a low voice; "no got heart, and June no let you, if had. June's moder prisoner once, and warriors got drunk; moder tomahawked 'em all. Such de way red skin women do when people in danger and want scalp."

"You say what is true," returned Mabel, shuddering, and unconsciously dropping June's hand. "I cannot do that. I have neither the strength, the courage, nor the will to dip my hands in blood."

"T'ink that too; then stay where you be — blockhouse good — got no scalp."

"You believe, then, that I am safe here, at least until my father and his people return?"

"Know so. No dare touch blockhouse in morning. Hark! all still now — drink rum till head fall down, and sleep like log."

"Might I not escape? Are there not several canoes on the island? Might I not get one, and go and give my father notice of what has happened?"

"Know how to paddle?" demanded June, glancing her eye furtively at her companion.

"Not so well as yourself, perhaps; but enough to get out of sight before morning."

"What do then? — couldn't paddle six — ten — eight mile!"

"I do not know; I would do much to warn my father, and the excellent Pathfinder, and all the rest, of the danger they are in."

"Like Pathfinder?"

"All like him who know him — you would like him, nay, love him, if you only knew his heart!"

"No like him at all. Too good rifle — too good eye — too much shoot Iroquois and June's people. Must get his scalp if can."

"And I must save it if I can, June. In this respect, then, we are opposed to each other. I will go and find a canoe the instant they are all asleep, and quit the island."

"No can — June won't let you. Call Arrowhead."

"June! you would not betray me — you could not give me up after all you have done for me?"

"Just so," returned June, making a backward gesture with her hand, and speaking with a warmth and earnestness Mabel had never witnessed in her before. "Call Arrowhead in loud voice. One call from wife wake a warrior up. June no let Lily help enemy — no let Indian hurt Lily."

"I understand you, June, and feel the nature and justice of your sentiments; and, after all, it were better that I should remain here, for I have most probably overrated my strength. But tell me one thing: if my uncle comes in the night, and asks to be admitted, you will let me open the door of the blockhouse that he may enter?"

"Sertain — he prisoner here, and June like prisoner better than scalp; scalp good for honor, prisoner good for feeling. But Saltwater hide so close, he don't know where he be himself."

Here June laughed in her girlish, mirthful way, for to her scenes of violence were too familiar to leave impressions sufficiently deep to change her natural character. A long and discursive dialogue now followed, in which Mabel endeavored to obtain clearer notions of her actual situation, under a faint hope that she might possibly be enabled to turn some of the facts she thus learned to advantage. June answered all her interrogatories simply, but with a caution which showed she fully distinguished between that which was immaterial and that which might endanger the safety or embarrass the future operations of her friends. The substance of the information she gave may be summed up as follows.

Arrowhead had long been in communication with the French, though this was the first occasion on which he had entirely thrown aside the mask. He no longer intended to trust himself among the English, for he had discovered traces of

distrust, particularly in Pathfinder; and, with Indian bravado, he now rather wished to blazon than to conceal his treachery. He had led the party of warriors in the attack on the island, subject, however, to the supervision of the Frenchman who has been mentioned, though June declined saying whether he had been the means of discovering the position of a place which had been thought to be so concealed from the enemy or not. On this point she would say nothing; but she admitted that she and her husband had been watching the departure of the *Scud* at the time they were overtaken and captured by the cutter. The French had obtained their information of the precise position of the station but very recently; and Mabel felt a pang when she thought that there were covert allusions of the Indian woman which would convey the meaning that the intelligence had come from a pale-face in the employment of Duncan of Lundie. This was intimated, however, rather than said; and when Mabel had time to reflect on her companion's words, she found room to hope that she had misunderstood her, and that Jasper Western would yet come out of the affair freed from every injurious imputation.

June did not hesitate to confess that she had been sent to the island to ascertain the precise number and the occupations of those who had been left on it, though she also betrayed in her *naïve* way that the wish to serve Mabel had induced her principally to consent to come. In consequence of her report, and information otherwise obtained, the enemy was aware of precisely the force that could be brought against them. They also knew the number of men who had gone with Sergeant Dunham, and were acquainted with the object he had in view, though they were ignorant of the spot where he expected to meet the French boats. It would have been a pleasant sight to witness the eager desire of each of these two sincere females to ascertain all that might be of consequence to their respective friends; and yet the native delicacy with which each refrained from pressing the other to make revelations which would have been improper, as well as the sensitive, almost intuitive, feeling with which each avoided saying aught that might prove injurious to her own nation. As respects each other, there was perfect confidence; as regarded their respective people, entire fidelity. June was quite as anxious as Mabel could be on any other point to know where the Sergeant had gone and when he was expected to return; but she abstained from putting the question, with a delicacy that would have done honor to the highest civilization; nor did she once frame any other inquiry in a way to lead indirectly to a betrayal of the much-desired information on that particular point: though when Mabel of her own accord touched on any matter that might by possibility throw a light on the subject, she listened with an intentness which almost suspended respiration.

In this manner the hours passed away unheeded, for both were too much interested to think of rest. Nature asserted her rights, however, towards morning; and Mabel was persuaded to lie down on one of the straw beds provided for the soldiers, where she soon fell into a deep sleep. June lay near her and a quiet reigned on the whole island as profound as if the dominion of the forest had never been invaded by man.

When Mabel awoke the light of the sun was streaming in through the loopholes, and she found that the day was considerably advanced. June still lay near her, sleeping as tranquilly as if she reposed on — we will not say “down,” for the superior civilization of our own times repudiates the simile — but on a French mattress, and as profoundly as if she had never experienced concern. The movements of Mabel, notwithstanding, soon awakened one so accustomed to vigilance; and then the two took a survey of what was passing around them by means of the friendly apertures.



## CHAPTER 23.

*What had the Eternall Maker need of thee,  
The world in his continuall course to keepe,  
That doest all things deface? ne lettest see  
The beautie of his worke? Indeede in sleepe,  
The slouth full body that doth love to steepe  
His lustlesse limbs, and drowne his baser mind,  
Doth praise thee oft, and oft from Stygian deepe,  
Calles thee his goddesse, in his errour blind,  
And great dame Nature's hand-maide, chearing every kinde.*  
FAERIE QUEENE.

The tranquillity of the previous night was not contradicted by the movements of the day. Although Mabel and June went to every loophole, not a sign of the presence of a living being on the island was at first to be seen, themselves excepted. There was a smothered fire on the spot where M'Nab and his comrades had cooked, as if the smoke which curled upwards from it was intended as a lure to the absent; and all around the huts had been restored to former order and arrangement. Mabel started involuntarily when her eye at length fell on a group of three men, dressed in the scarlet of the 55th, seated on the grass in lounging attitudes, as if they chatted in listless security; and her blood curdled as, on a second look, she traced the bloodless faces and glassy eyes of the dead. They were very near the blockhouse, so near indeed as to have been overlooked at the first eager inquiry, and there was a mocking levity in their postures and gestures, for their limbs were stiffening in different attitudes, intended to resemble life, at which the soul revolted. Still, horrible as these objects were to those near enough to discover the frightful discrepancy between their assumed and their real characters, the arrangement had been made with so much art that it would have deceived a negligent observer at the distance of a hundred yards. After carefully examining the shores of the island, June pointed out to her companion the fourth soldier, seated, with his feet hanging over the water, his back fastened to a sapling, and holding a fishing-rod in his hand. The scalpless heads were covered with the caps, and all appearance of blood had been carefully washed from each countenance.

Mabel sickened at this sight, which not only did so much violence to all her notions of propriety, but which was in itself so revolting and so opposed to natural feeling. She withdrew to a seat, and hid her face in her apron for several minutes, until a low call from June again drew her to a loophole. The latter then pointed out the body of Jennie seemingly standing in the door of a hut, leaning forward as if to look at the group of men, her cap fluttering in the wind, and her hand grasping a broom. The distance was too great to distinguish the features very accurately; but Mabel fancied that the jaw had been depressed, as if to distort the mouth into a sort of horrible laugh.

"June! June!" she exclaimed; "this exceeds all I have ever heard, or imagined as possible, in the treachery and artifices of your people."

"Tuscarora very cunning," said June, in a way to show that she rather approved of than condemned the uses to which the dead bodies had been applied. "Do soldier no harm now; do Iroquois good; got the scalp first; now make bodies work. By and by, burn 'em."

This speech told Mabel how far she was separated from her friend in character; and it was several minutes before she could again address her. But this temporary aversion was lost on June, who set about preparing their simple breakfast, in a way to show how insensible she was to feelings in others which her own habits taught her to discard. Mabel ate sparingly, and her companion, as if nothing had happened. Then they had leisure again for their thoughts, and for further surveys of the island. Our heroine, though devoured with a feverish desire to be always at the loops, seldom went that she did not immediately quit them in disgust, though compelled by her apprehensions to return again in a few minutes, called by the rustling of leaves, or the sighing of the wind. It was, indeed, a solemn thing to look out upon that deserted spot, peopled by the dead in the panoply of the living, and thrown into the attitudes and acts of careless merriment and rude enjoyment. The effect on our heroine was much as if she had found herself an observer of the revelries of demons.

Throughout the livelong day not an Indian nor a Frenchman was to be seen, and night closed over the frightful but silent masquerade, with the steady and unalterable progress with which the earth obeys her laws, indifferent to the petty actors and petty scenes that are in daily bustle and daily occurrence on her bosom. The night was far more quiet than that which had preceded it, and Mabel slept with an increasing confidence; for she now felt satisfied that her own fate would

not be decided until the return of her father. The following day he was expected, however, and when our heroine awoke, she ran eagerly to the loops in order to ascertain the state of the weather and the aspect of the skies, as well as the condition of the island. There lounged the fearful group on the grass; the fisherman still hung over the water, seemingly intent on his sport; and the distorted countenance of Jennie glared from out the hut in horrible contortions. But the weather had changed; the wind blew fresh from the southward, and though the air was bland, it was filled with the elements of storm.

"This grows more and more difficult to bear, June," Mabel said, when she left the window. "I could even prefer to see the enemy than to look any longer on this fearful array of the dead."

"Hush! Here they come. June thought hear a cry like a warrior's shout when he take a scalp."

"What mean you? There is no more butchery! — there can be no more."

"Saltwater!" exclaimed June, laughing, as she stood peeping through a loophole.

"My dear uncle! Thank God! he then lives! Oh, June, June, *you* will not let them harm *him*?"

"June, poor squaw. What warrior t'ink of what she say? Arrowhead bring him here."

By this time Mabel was at a loop; and, sure enough, there were Cap and the Quartermaster in the hands of the Indians, eight or ten of whom were conducting them to the foot of the block, for, by this capture, the enemy now well knew that there could be no man in the building. Mabel scarcely breathed until the whole party stood ranged directly before the door, when she was rejoiced to see that the French officer was among them. A low conversation followed, in which both the white leader and Arrowhead spoke earnestly to their captives, when the Quartermaster called out to her in a voice loud enough to be heard.

"Pretty Mabel! Pretty Mabel!" said he; "Look out of one of the loopholes, and pity our condition. We are threatened with instant death unless you open the door to the conquerors. Relent, then or we'll no' be wearing our scalps half an hour from this blessed moment."

Mabel thought there were mockery and levity in this appeal, and its manner rather fortified than weakened her resolution to hold the place as long as possible.

"Speak to me, uncle," said she, with her mouth at a loop, "and tell me what I ought to do."

"Thank God! thank God!" ejaculated Cap; "the sound of your sweet voice, Magnet, lightens my heart of a heavy load, for I feared you had shared the fate of poor Jennie. My breast has felt the last four-and-twenty hours as if a ton of kentledge had been stowed in it. You ask me what you ought to do, child, and I do not know how to advise you, though you are my own sister's daughter! The most I can say just now, my poor girl, is most heartily to curse the day you or I ever saw this bit of fresh water."

"But, uncle, is your life in danger — do *you* think I ought to open the door?"

"A round turn and two half-hitches make a fast belay; and I would counsel no one who is out of the hands of these devils to unbar or unfasten anything in order to fall into them. As to the Quartermaster and myself, we are both elderly men, and not of much account to mankind in general, as honest Pathfinder would say; and it can make no great odds to him whether he balances the purser's books this year or the next; and as for myself, why, if I were on the seaboard, I should know what to do, but up here, in this watery wilderness, I can only say, that if I were behind that bit of a bulwark, it would take a good deal of Indian logic to rouse me out of it."

"You'll no' be minding all your uncle says, pretty Mabel," put in Muir, "for distress is obviously fast unsettling his faculties, and he is far from calculating all the necessities of the emergency. We are in the hands here of very considerate and gentlemanly pairsons, it must be acknowledged, and one has little occasion to apprehend disagreeable violence. The casualties that have occurred are the common incidents of war, and can no' change our sentiments of the enemy, for they are far from indicating that any injustice will be done the prisoners. I'm sure that neither Master Cap nor myself has any cause of complaint since we have given ourselves up to Master Arrowhead, who reminds me of a Roman or a Spartan by his virtues and moderation; but ye'll be remembering that usages differ, and that our scalps may be lawful sacrifices to appease the manes of fallen foes, unless you save them by capitulation."

"I shall do wiser to keep within the blockhouse until the fate of the island is settled," returned Mabel. "Our enemies can feel no concern on account of one like me, knowing that I can do them no harm, and I greatly prefer to remain here as more befitting my sex and years."

"If nothing but your convenience were concerned, Mabel, we should all cheerfully acquiesce in your wishes, but these gentlemen fancy that the work will aid their operations, and they have a strong desire to possess it. To be frank with you, finding myself and your uncle in a very peculiar situation, I acknowledge that, to avert consequences, I have assumed the power that belongs to his Majesty's commission, and entered into a verbal capitulation, by which I have engaged to give up the blockhouse and the whole island. It is the fortune of war, and must be submitted to; so open the door, pretty Mabel, forthwith, and confide yourself to the care of those who know how to treat beauty and virtue in distress. There's no courtier in Scotland more complaisant than this chief, or who is more familiar with the laws of decorum."

"No leave blockhouse," muttered June, who stood at Mabel's side, attentive to all that passed. "Blockhouse good — got no scalp."

Our heroine might have yielded but for this appeal; for it began to appear to her that the wisest course would be to conciliate the enemy by concessions instead of exasperating them by resistance. They must know that Muir and her uncle were in their power; that there was no man in the building, and she fancied they might proceed to batter down the door, or cut their way through the logs with axes, if she obstinately refused to give them peaceable admission, since there was no longer any reason to dread the rifle. But the words of June induced her to hesitate, and the earnest pressure of the hand and entreating looks of her companion strengthened a resolution that was faltering.

"No prisoner yet," whispered June; "let 'em make prisoner before 'ey take prisoner — talk big; June manage 'em."

Mabel now began to parley more resolutely with Muir, for her uncle seemed disposed to quiet his conscience by holding his tongue, and she plainly intimated that it was not her intention to yield the building.

"You forget the capitulation, Mistress Mabel," said Muir; "the honor of one of his Majesty's servants is concerned, and the honor of his Majesty through his servant. You will remember the finesse and delicacy that belong to military honor?"

"I know enough, Mr. Muir, to understand that you have no command in this expedition, and therefore can have no right to yield the blockhouse; and I remember, moreover, to have heard my dear father say that a prisoner loses all his authority for the time being."

"Rank sophistry, pretty Mabel, and treason to the king, as well as dishonoring his commission and discrediting his name. You'll no' be persevering in your intentions, when your better judgment has had leisure to reflect and to make conclusions on matters and circumstances."

"Ay," put in Cap, "this is a circumstance, and be d — d to it!"

"No mind what'e uncle say," ejaculated June, who was occupied in a far corner of the room. "Blockhouse good — got no scalp."

"I shall remain as I am, Mr. Muir, until I get some tidings of my father. He will return in the course of the next ten days."

"Ah, Mabel, this artifice will no' deceive the enemy, who, by means that would be unintelligible, did not our suspicions rest on an unhappy young man with too much plausibility, are familiar with all our doings and plans, and well know that the sun will not set before the worthy Sergeant and his companions will be in their power. Aweel! Submission to Providence is truly a Christian virtue!"

"Mr. Muir, you appear to be deceived in the strength of this work, and to fancy it weaker than it is. Do you desire to see what I can do in the way of defence, if so disposed?"

"I dinna mind if I do," answered the Quartermaster, who always grew Scotch as he grew interested.

"What do you think of that, then? Look at the loop of the upper story!"

As soon as Mabel had spoken, all eyes were turned upward, and beheld the muzzle of a rifle cautiously thrust through a hole, June having resorted again to a *ruse* which had already proved so successful. The result did not disappoint expectation. No sooner did the Indians catch a sight of the fatal weapon than they leaped aside, and in less than a minute every man among them had sought a cover. The French officer kept his eye on the barrel of the piece in order to ascertain that it was not pointed in his particular direction, and he coolly took a pinch of snuff. As neither Muir nor Cap had anything to apprehend from the quarter in which the others were menaced, they kept their ground.

"Be wise, my pretty Mabel, be wise!" exclaimed the former; "and no' be provoking useless contention. In the name of all the kings of Albin, who have ye closeted with you in that wooden tower that seemeth so bloody-minded? There is

necromancy about this matter, and all our characters may be involved in the explanation.”

“What do you think of the Pathfinder, Master Muir, for a garrison to so strong a post?” cried Mabel, resorting to an equivocation which the circumstances rendered very excusable. “What will your French and Indian companions think of the aim of the Pathfinder’s rifle?”

“Bear gently on the unfortunate, pretty Mabel, and do not confound the king’s servants — may Heaven bless him and all his royal lineage! — with the king’s enemies. If Pathfinder be indeed in the blockhouse, let him speak, and we will hold our negotiations directly with him. He knows us as friends, and we fear no evil at his hands, and least of all to myself; for a generous mind is apt to render rivalry in a certain interest a sure ground of respect and amity, since admiration of the same woman proves a community of feeling and tastes.”

The reliance on Pathfinder’s friendship did not extend beyond the Quartermaster and Cap, however, for even the French officer, who had hitherto stood his ground so well, shrank back at the sound of the terrible name. So unwilling, indeed, did this individual, a man of iron nerves, and one long accustomed to the dangers of the peculiar warfare in which he was engaged, appear to remain exposed to the assaults of Killdeer, whose reputation throughout all that frontier was as well established as that of Marlborough in Europe, that he did not disdain to seek a cover, insisting that his two prisoners should follow him. Mabel was too glad to be rid of her enemies to lament the departure of her friends, though she kissed her hand to Cap through the loop, and called out to him in terms of affection as he moved slowly and unwillingly away.

The enemy now seemed disposed to abandon all attempts on the blockhouse for the present; and June, who had ascended to a trap in the roof, whence the best view was to be obtained, reported that the whole party had assembled to eat, on a distant and sheltered part of the island, where Muir and Cap were quietly sharing in the good things which were going, as if they had no concern on their minds. This information greatly relieved Mabel, and she began to turn her thoughts again to the means of effecting her own escape, or at least of letting her father know of the danger that awaited him. The Sergeant was expected to return that afternoon, and she knew that a moment gained or lost might decide his fate.

Three or four hours flew by. The island was again buried in a profound quiet, the day was wearing away, and yet Mabel had decided on nothing. June was in the basement, preparing their frugal meal, and Mabel herself had ascended to the roof, which was provided with a trap that allowed her to go out on the top of the building, whence she commanded the best view of surrounding objects that the island possessed; still it was limited, and much obstructed by the tops of trees. The anxious girl did not dare to trust her person in sight, knowing well that the unrestrained passions of some savage might induce him to send a bullet through her brain. She merely kept her head out of the trap, therefore, whence, in the course of the afternoon, she made as many surveys of the different channels about the island as “Anne, sister Anne,” took of the environs of the castle of Blue Beard.

The sun had actually set; no intelligence had been received from the boats, and Mabel ascended to the roof to take a last look, hoping that the party would arrive in the darkness; which would at least prevent the Indians from rendering their ambuscade so fatal as it might otherwise prove, and which possibly might enable her to give some more intelligible signal, by means of fire, than it would otherwise be in her power to do. Her eye had turned carefully round the whole horizon, and she was just on the point of drawing in her person, when an object that struck her as new caught her attention. The islands lay grouped so closely, that six or eight different channels or passages between them were in view; and in one of the most covered, concealed in a great measure by the bushes of the shore, lay what a second look assured her was a bark canoe. It contained a human being beyond a question. Confident that if an enemy her signal could do no harm, and; if a friend, that it might do good, the eager girl waved a little flag towards the stranger, which she had prepared for her father, taking care that it should not be seen from the island.

Mabel had repeated her signal eight or ten times in vain, and she began to despair of its being noticed, when a sign was given in return by the wave of a paddle, and the man so far discovered himself as to let her see it was Chingachgook. Here, then, at last, was a friend; one, too, who was able, and she doubted not would be willing to aid her. From that instant her courage and her spirits revived. The Mohican had seen her; must have recognized her, as he knew that she was of the party; and no doubt, as soon as it was sufficiently dark, he would take the steps necessary to release her. That he was aware of the presence of the enemy was apparent by the great caution he observed, and she had every reliance on his prudence and address. The principal difficulty now existed with June; for Mabel had seen too much of her fidelity to her own people, relieved as it was by sympathy for herself, to believe she would consent to a hostile Indian’s entering the blockhouse, or indeed to her leaving it, with a view to defeat Arrowhead’s plans. The half-hour which succeeded the discovery of the

presence of the Great Serpent was the most painful of Mabel Dunham's life. She saw the means of effecting all she wished, as it might be within reach of her hand, and yet it eluded her grasp. She knew June's decision and coolness, notwithstanding all her gentleness and womanly feeling; and at last she came reluctantly to the conclusion that there was no other way of attaining her end than by deceiving her tried companion and protector. It was revolting to one so sincere and natural, so pure of heart, and so much disposed to ingenuousness as Mabel Dunham, to practise deception on a friend like June; but her own father's life was at stake, her companion would receive no positive injury, and she had feelings and interests directly touching herself which would have removed greater scruples.

As soon as it was dark, Mabel's heart began to beat with increased violence; and she adopted and changed her plan of proceeding at least a dozen times in a single hour. June was always the source of her greatest embarrassment; for she did not well see, first, how she was to ascertain when Chingachgook was at the door, where she doubted not he would soon appear; and, secondly, how she was to admit him, without giving the alarm to her watchful companion. Time pressed, however; for the Mohican might come and go away again, unless she was ready to receive him. It would be too hazardous to the Delaware to remain long on the island; and it became absolutely necessary to determine on some course, even at the risk of choosing one that was indiscreet. After running over various projects in her mind, therefore, Mabel came to her companion, and said, with as much calmness as she could assume —

"Are you not afraid, June, now your people believe Pathfinder is in the blockhouse, that they will come and try to set it on fire?"

"No t'ink such t'ing. No burn blockhouse. Blockhouse good; got no scalp."

"June, we cannot know. They hid because they believed what I told them of Pathfinder's being with us."

"Believe fear. Fear come quick, go quick. Fear make run away; wit make come back. Fear make warrior fool, as well as young girl."

Here June laughed, as her sex is apt to laugh when anything particularly ludicrous crosses their youthful fancies.

"I feel uneasy, June; and wish you yourself would go up again to the roof and look out upon the island, to make certain that nothing is plotting against us; you know the signs of what your people intend to do better than I."

"June go, Lily wish; but very well know that Indian sleep; wait for 'e fader. Warrior eat, drink, sleep, all time, when don't fight and go on war-trail. Den never sleep, eat, drink — never feel. Warrior sleep now."

"God send it may be so! but go up, dear June, and look well about you. Danger may come when we least expect it."

June arose, and prepared to ascend to the roof; but she paused, with her foot on the first round of the ladder. Mabel's heart beat so violently that she was fearful its throbs would be heard; and she fancied that some gleamings of her real intentions had crossed the mind of her friend. She was right in part, the Indian woman having actually stopped to consider whether there was any indiscretion in what she was about to do. At first the suspicion that Mabel intended to escape flashed across her mind; then she rejected it, on the ground that the pale-face had no means of getting off the island, and that the blockhouse was much the most secure place she could find. The next thought was, that Mabel had detected some sign of the near approach of her father. This idea, too, lasted but an instant; for June entertained some such opinion of her companion's ability to understand symptoms of this sort — symptoms that had escaped her own sagacity — as a woman of high fashion entertains of the accomplishments of her maid. Nothing else in the same way offering, she began slowly to mount the ladder.

Just as she reached the upper floor, a lucky thought suggested itself to our heroine; and, by expressing it in a hurried but natural manner, she gained a great advantage in executing her projected scheme.

"I will go down," she said, "and listen by the door, June, while you are on the roof; and we will thus be on our guard, at the same time, above and below."

Though June thought this savored of unnecessary caution, well knowing that no one could enter the building unless aided from within, nor any serious danger menace them from the exterior without giving sufficient warning, she attributed the proposition to Mabel's ignorance and alarm; and, as it was made apparently with frankness, it was received without distrust. By these means our heroine was enabled to descend to the door, as her friend ascended to the roof. The distance between the two was now too great to admit of conversation; and for three or four minutes one was occupied in looking about her as well as the darkness would allow, and the other in listening at the door with as much intentness as if all her senses were absorbed in the single faculty of hearing.

June discovered nothing from her elevated stand; the obscurity indeed almost forbade the hope of such a result; but it would not be easy to describe the sensation with which Mabel thought she perceived a slight and guarded push against the door. Fearful that all might not be as she wished, and anxious to let Chingachgook know that she was near, she began, though in tremulous and low notes, to sing. So profound was the stillness of the moment that the sound of the unsteady warbling ascended to the roof and in a minute June began to descend. A slight tap at the door was heard immediately after. Mabel was bewildered, for there was no time to lose. Hope proved stronger than fear; and with unsteady hands she commenced unbarring the door. The moccasin of June was heard on the floor above her when only a single bar was turned. The second was released as her form reached half-way down the lower ladder.

"What you do?" exclaimed June angrily. "Run away — mad — leave blockhouse; blockhouse good." The hands of both were on the last bar, and it would have been cleared from the fastenings but for a vigorous shove from without, which jammed the wood. A short struggle ensued, though both were disinclined to violence. June would probably have prevailed, had not another and a more vigorous push from without forced the bar past the trifling impediment that held it, when the door opened. The form of a man was seen to enter; and both the females rushed up the ladder, as if equally afraid of the consequences. The stranger secured the door; and, first examining the lower room with great care, he cautiously ascended the ladder. June, as soon as it became dark, had closed the loops of the principal floor, and lighted a candle. By means of this dim taper, then, the two females stood in expectation, waiting to ascertain the person of their visitor, whose wary ascent of the ladder was distinctly audible, though sufficiently deliberate. It would not be easy to say which was the more astonished on finding, when the stranger had got through the trap, that Pathfinder stood before them.

"God be praised!" Mabel exclaimed, for the idea that the blockhouse would be impregnable with such a garrison at once crossed her mind. "O Pathfinder! what has become of my father?"

"The Sergeant is safe as yet, and victorious; though it is not in the gift of man to say what will be the end of it. Is not that the wife of Arrowhead skulking in the corner there?"

"Speak not of her reproachfully, Pathfinder; I owe her my life, my present security. Tell me what has happened to my father's party — why you are here; and I will relate all the horrible events that have passed upon this island."

"Few words will do the last, Mabel; for one used to Indian devilries needs but little explanations on such a subject. Everything turned out as we had hoped with the expedition; for the Serpent was on the look-out, and he met us with all the information heart could desire. We ambushed three boats, drove the Frenchers out of them, got possession and sunk them, according to orders, in the deepest part of the channel; and the savages of Upper Canada will fare badly for Indian goods this winter. Both powder and ball, too, will be scarcer among them than keen hunters and active warriors may relish. We did not lose a man or have even a skin barked; nor do I think the enemy suffered to speak of. In short, Mabel, it has been just such an expedition as Lundie likes; much harm to the foe, and little harm to ourselves."

"Ah, Pathfinder, I fear, when Major Duncan comes to hear the whole of the sad tale, he will find reason to regret he ever undertook the affair."

"I know what you mean, I know what you mean; but by telling my story straight you will understand it better. As soon as the Sergeant found himself successful, he sent me and the Serpent off in canoes to tell you how matters had turned out, and he is following with the two boats, which, being so much heavier, cannot arrive before morning. I parted from Chingachgook this forenoon, it being agreed that he should come up one set of channels, and I another, to see that the path was clear. I've not seen the chief since."

Mabel now explained the manner in which she had discovered the Mohican, and her expectation that he would yet come to the blockhouse.

"Not he, not he! A regular scout will never get behind walls or logs so long as he can keep the open air and find useful employment. I should not have come myself, Mabel, but I promised the Sergeant to comfort you and to look after your safety. Ah's me! I reconnoitred the island with a heavy heart this forenoon; and there was a bitter hour when I fancied you might be among the slain."

"By what lucky accident were you prevented from paddling up boldly to the island and from falling into the hands of the enemy?"

"By such an accident, Mabel, as Providence employs to tell the hound where to find the deer and the deer how to throw off the hound. No, no! these artifices and devilries with dead bodies may deceive the soldiers of the 55th and the king's



officers; but they are all lost upon men who have passed their days in the forest. I came down the channel in face of the pretended fisherman; and, though the riptyles have set up the poor wretch with art, it was not ingenious enough to take in a practysed eye. The rod was held too high, for the 55th have learned to fish at Oswego, if they never knew how before; and then the man was too quiet for one who got neither prey nor bite. But we never come in upon a post blindly; and I have lain outside a garrison a whole night, because they had changed their sentries and their mode of standing guard. Neither the Sarpent nor myself would be likely to be taken in by these clumsy contrivances, which were most probably intended for the Scotch, who are cunning enough in some particulars, though anything but witches when Indian sarcumventions are in the wind."

"Do you think my father and his men may yet be deceived?" said Mabel quickly.

"Not if I can prevent it, Mabel. You say the Sarpent is on the look-out too; so there is a double chance of our succeeding in letting him know his danger; though it is by no means sartain by which channel the party may come."

"Pathfinder," said our heroine solemnly, for the frightful scenes she had witnessed had clothed death with unusual horrors — "Pathfinder, you have professed love for me, a wish to make me your wife?"

"I did ventur' to speak on that subject, Mabel, and the Sergeant has even lately said that you are kindly disposed; but I am not a man to persecute the thing I love."

"Hear me, Pathfinder, I respect you, honor you, revere you; save my father from this dreadful death, and I can worship you. Here is my hand, as a solemn pledge for my faith, when you come to claim it."

"Bless you, bless you, Mabel; this is more than I desarme — more, I fear, than I shall know how to profit by as I ought. It was not wanting, however, to make me sarve the Sergeant. We are old comrades, and owe each other a life; though I fear me, Mabel, being a father's comrade is not always the best recommendation with a daughter."

"You want no other recommendation than your own acts — your courage, your fidelity. All that you do and say, Pathfinder, my reason approves, and the heart will, nay, it *shall* follow."

"This is a happiness I little expected this night; but we are in God's hands, and He will protect us in His own way. These are sweet words, Mabel; but they were not wanting to make me do all that man can do in the present circumstances; they will not lessen my endeavors, neither."

"Now we understand each other, Pathfinder," Mabel added hoarsely, "let us not lose one of the precious moments, which may be of incalculable value. Can we not get into your canoe and go and meet my father?"

"That is not the course I advise. I don't know by which channel the Sergeant will come, and there are twenty; rely on it, the Sarpent will be winding his way through them all. No, no! my advice is to remain here. The logs of this blockhouse are still green, and it will not be easy to set them on fire; and I can make good the place, bating a burning, ag'in a tribe. The Iroquois nation cannot dislodge me from this fortress, so long as we can keep the flames off it. The Sergeant is now 'camped on some island, and will not come in until morning. If we hold the block, we can give him timely warning, by firing rifles, for instance; and should he determine to attack the savages, as a man of his temper will be very likely to do, the possession of this building will be of great account in the affair. No, no! my judgment says remain, if the object be to sarve the Sergeant, though escape for our two selves will be no very difficult matter."

"Stay," murmured Mabel, "stay, for God's sake, Pathfinder! Anything, everything to save my father!"

"Yes, that is natur'. I am glad to hear you say this, Mabel, for I own a wish to see the Sergeant fairly supported. As the matter now stands, he has gained himself credit; and, could he once drive off these miscreants, and make an honorable retreat, laying the huts and block in ashes, no doubt, Lundie would remember it and sarve him accordingly. Yes, yes, Mabel, we must not only save the Sergeant's life, but we must save his reputation."

"No blame can rest on my father on account of the surprise of this island."

"There's no telling, there's no telling; military glory is a most unsartain thing. I've seen the Delawares routed, when they desarmed more credit than at other times when they've carried the day. A man is wrong to set his head on success of any sort, and worst of all on success in war. I know little of the settlements, or of the notions that men hold in them; but up hereaway even the Indians rate a warrior's character according to his luck. The principal thing with a soldier is never to be whipt; nor do I think mankind stops long to consider how the day was won or lost. For my part, Mabel, I make it a rule when facing the inimy to give him as good as I can send, and to try to be moderate after a defeat, little need be said on that score, as a flogging is one of the most humbling things in natur'. The parsons preach about humility in the garrison; but if

humility would make Christians, the king's troops ought to be saints, for they've done little as yet this war but take lessons from the French, beginning at Fort du Quesne and ending at Ty."

"My father could not have suspected that the position of the island was known to the enemy," resumed Mabel, whose thoughts were running on the probable effect of the recent events on the Sergeant.

"That is true; nor do I well see how the Frenchers found it out. The spot is well chosen, and it is not an easy matter, even for one who has travelled the road to and from it, to find it again. There has been treachery, I fear; yes, yes, there must have been treachery."

"Oh, Pathfinder! can this be?"

"Nothing is easier, Mabel, for treachery comes as nat'ral to some men as eating. Now when I find a man all fair words I look close to his deeds; for when the heart is right, and really intends to do good, it is generally satisfied to let the conduct speak instead of the tongue."

"Jasper Western is not one of these," said Mabel impetuously. "No youth can be more sincere in his manner, or less apt to make the tongue act for the head."

"Jasper Western! tongue and heart are both right with that lad, depend on it, Mabel; and the notion taken up by Lundie, and the Quartermaster, and the Sergeant, and your uncle too, is as wrong as it would be to think that the sun shone by night and the stars shone by day. No, no; I'll answer for Eau-douce's honesty with my own scalp, or, at need, with my own rifle."

"Bless you, bless you, Pathfinder!" exclaimed Mabel, extending her own hand and pressing the iron fingers of her companion, under a state of feeling that far surpassed her own consciousness of its strength. "You are all that is generous, all that is noble! God will reward you for it."

"Ah, Mabel, I fear me, if this be true, I should not covet such a wife as yourself; but would leave you to be sued for by some gentleman of the garrison, as your desarts require."

"We will not talk of this any more to-night," Mabel answered in a voice so smothered as to seem nearly choked. "We must think less of ourselves just now, Pathfinder, and more of our friends. But I rejoice from my soul that you believe Jasper innocent. Now let us talk of other things — ought we not to release June?"

"I've been thinking about the woman; for it will not be safe to shut our eyes and leave hers open, on this side of the blockhouse door. If we put her in the upper room, and take away the ladder, she'll be a prisoner at least."

"I cannot treat one thus who has saved my life. It would be better to let her depart, for I think she is too much my friend to do anything to harm me."

"You do not know the race, Mabel, you do not know the race. It's true she's not a full-blooded Mingo, but she consorts with the vagabonds, and must have larned some of their tricks. What is that?"

"It sounds like oars; some boat is passing through the channel."

Pathfinder closed the trap that led to the lower room, to prevent June from escaping, extinguished the candle, and went hastily to a loop, Mabel looking over his shoulder in breathless curiosity. These several movements consumed a minute or two; and by the time the eye of the scout had got a dim view of things without, two boats had swept past and shot up to the shore, at a spot some fifty yards beyond the block, where there was a regular landing. The obscurity prevented more from being seen; and Pathfinder whispered to Mabel that the new-comers were as likely to be foes as friends, for he did not think her father could possibly have arrived so soon. A number of men were now seen to quit the boats, and then followed three hearty English cheers, leaving no further doubts of the character of the party. Pathfinder sprang to the trap, raised it, glided down the ladder, and began to unbar the door, with an earnestness that proved how critical he deemed the moment. Mabel had followed, but she rather impeded than aided his exertions, and but a single bar was turned when a heavy discharge of rifles was heard. They were still standing in breathless suspense, as the war-whoop rang in all the surrounding thickets. The door now opened, and both Pathfinder and Mabel rushed into the open air. All human sounds had ceased. After listening half a minute, however, Pathfinder thought he heard a few stifled groans near the boats; but the wind blew so fresh, and the rustling of the leaves mingled so much with the murmurs of the passing air, that he was far from certain. But Mabel was borne away by her feelings, and she rushed by him, taking the way towards the boats.

"This will not do, Mabel," said the scout in an earnest but low voice, seizing her by an arm; "this will never do. Sartain

death would follow, and that without saving any one. We must return to the block."

"Father! my poor, dear, murdered father!" said the girl wildly, though habitual caution, even at that trying moment, induced her to speak low. "Pathfinder, if you love me, let me go to my dear father."

"This will not do, Mabel. It is singular that no one speaks; no one returns the fire from the boats; and I have left Killdeer in the block! But of what use would a rifle be when no one is to be seen?"

At that moment the quick eye of Pathfinder, which, while he held Mabel firmly in his grasp, had never ceased to roam over the dim scene, caught an indistinct view of five or six dark crouching forms, endeavoring to steal past him, doubtless with the intention of intercepting the retreat to the blockhouse. Catching up Mabel, and putting her under an arm, as if she were an infant, the sinewy frame of the woodsman was exerted to the utmost, and he succeeded in entering the building. The tramp of his pursuers seemed immediately at his heels. Dropping his burden, he turned, closed the door, and had fastened one bar, as a rush against the solid mass threatened to force it from the hinges. To secure the other bars was the work of an instant.

Mabel now ascended to the first floor, while Pathfinder remained as a sentinel below. Our heroine was in that state in which the body exerts itself, apparently without the control of the mind. She relighted the candle mechanically, as her companion had desired, and returned with it below, where he was waiting her reappearance. No sooner was Pathfinder in possession of the light than he examined the place carefully, to make certain no one was concealed in the fortress, ascending to each floor in succession, after assuring himself that he left no enemy in his rear. The result was the conviction that the blockhouse now contained no one but Mabel and himself, June having escaped. When perfectly convinced on this material point, Pathfinder rejoined our heroine in the principal apartment, setting down the light and examining the priming of Killdeer before he seated himself.

"Our worst fears are realized!" said Mabel, to whom the hurry and excitement of the last five minutes appeared to contain the emotions of a life. "My beloved father and all his party are slain or captured!"

"We don't know that — morning will tell us all. I do not think the affair so settled as that, or we should hear the vagabond Mingos yelling out their triumph around the blockhouse. Of one thing we may be certain; if the enemy has really got the better, he will not be long in calling upon us to surrender. The squaw will let him into the secret of our situation; and, as they well know the place cannot be fired by daylight, so long as Killdeer continues to deserve his reputation, you may depend on it that they will not be backward in making their attempt while darkness helps them."

"Surely I hear a groan!"

"Tis fancy, Mabel; when the mind gets to be seamy, especially a woman's mind, she often conceals things that have no reality. I've known them that imagined there was truth in dreams."

"Nay, I am *not* deceived; there is surely one below, and in pain."

Pathfinder was compelled to own that the quick senses of Mabel had not deceived her. He cautioned her, however, to repress her feelings; and reminded her that the savages were in the practice of resorting to every artifice to attain their ends, and that nothing was more likely than that the groans were feigned with a view to lure them from the blockhouse, or, at least, to induce them to open the door.

"No, no, no!" said Mabel hurriedly; "there is no artifice in those sounds, and they come from anguish of body, if not of spirit. They are fearfully natural."

"Well, we shall soon know whether a friend is there or not. Hide the light again, Mabel, and I will speak the person from a loop."

Not a little precaution was necessary, according to Pathfinder's judgment and experience, in performing even this simple act; for he had known the careless slain by their want of proper attention to what might have seemed to the ignorant supererogatory means of safety. He did not place his mouth to the loop itself, but so near it that he could be heard without raising his voice, and the same precaution was observed as regards his ear.

"Who is below?" Pathfinder demanded, when his arrangements were made to his mind. "Is any one in suffering? If a friend, speak boldly, and depend on our aid."

"Pathfinder!" answered a voice that both Mabel and the person addressed at once knew to be the Sergeant's — "Pathfinder, in the name of God, tell me what has become of my daughter."

“Father, I am here, unhurt, safe! and oh that I could think the same of you!”

The ejaculation of thanksgiving that followed was distinctly audible to the two, but it was clearly mingled with, a groan of pain.

“My worst forebodings are realized!” said Mabel with a sort of desperate calmness. “Pathfinder, my father must be brought within the block, though we hazard everything to do it.”

“This is natur’, and it is the law of God. But, Mabel, be calm, and endeavor to be cool. All that can be effected for the Sergeant by human invention shall be done. I only ask you to be cool.”

“I am, I am, Pathfinder. Never in my life was I more calm, more collected, than at this moment. But remember how perilous may be every instant; for Heaven’s sake, what we do, let us do without delay.”

Pathfinder was struck with the firmness of Mabel’s tones, and perhaps he was a little deceived by the forced tranquillity and self-possession she had assumed. At all events, he did not deem any further explanations necessary, but descended forthwith, and began to unbar the door. This delicate process was conducted with the usual caution, but, as he warily permitted the mass of timber to swing back on the hinges, he felt a pressure against it, that had nearly induced him to close it again. But, catching a glimpse of the cause through the crack, the door was permitted to swing back, when the body of Sergeant Dunham, which was propped against it, fell partly within the block. To draw in the legs and secure the fastenings occupied the Pathfinder but a moment. Then there existed no obstacle to their giving their undivided care to the wounded man.

Mabel, in this trying scene, conducted herself with the sort of unnatural energy that her sex, when aroused, is apt to manifest. She got the light, administered water to the parched lips of her father, and assisted Pathfinder in forming a bed of straw for his body and a pillow of clothes for his head. All this was done earnestly, and almost without speaking; nor did Mabel shed a tear, until she heard the blessings of her father murmured on her head for this tenderness and care. All this time Mabel had merely conjectured the condition of her parent. Pathfinder, however, had shown greater attention to the physical danger of the Sergeant. He had ascertained that a rifle-ball had passed through the body of the wounded man; and he was sufficiently familiar with injuries of this nature to be certain that the chances of his surviving the hurt were very trifling, if any.



## CHAPTER 24.

*Then drink my tears, while yet they fall —  
Would that my bosom's blood were balm;  
And — well thou knowest — I'd shed it all,  
To give thy brow one minute's calm.*

—MOORE.

The eyes of Sergeant Dunham had not ceased to follow the form of his beautiful daughter from the moment that the light appeared. He next examined the door of the block, to ascertain its security; for he was left on the ground below, there being no available means of raising him to the upper floor. Then he sought the face of Mabel; for as life wanes fast the affections resume their force, and we begin to value that most which we feel we are about to lose for ever.

“God be praised, my child! you, at least, have escaped their murderous rifles,” he said; for he spoke with strength, and seemingly with no additional pain. “Give me the history of this sad business, Pathfinder.”

“Ah’s me, Sergeant! It *has* been sad, as you say. That there has been treachery, and the position of the island has been betrayed, is now as sartain, in my judgment, as that we still hold the block. But —”

“Major Duncan was right,” interrupted Dunham, laying a hand on the other’s arm.

“Not in the sense you mean, Sergeant — no, not in that p’int of view; never! At least, not in my opinion. I know that natur’ is weak — human natur’, I mean — and that we should none of us vaunt of our gifts, whether red or white; but I do not think a truer-hearted lad lives on the lines than Jasper Western.”

“Bless you! bless you for that, Pathfinder!” burst forth from Mabel’s very soul, while a flood of tears gave vent to emotions that were so varied while they were so violent. “Oh, bless you, Pathfinder, bless you! The brave should never desert the brave — the honest should sustain the honest.”

The father’s eyes were fastened anxiously on the face of his daughter, until the latter hid her countenance in her apron to conceal her tears; and then they turned with inquiry to the hard features of the guide. The latter merely wore their usual expression of frankness, sincerity, and uprightness; and the Sergeant motioned to him to proceed.

“You know the spot where the Sarpent and I left you, Sergeant,” Pathfinder resumed; “and I need say nothing of all that happened afore. It is now too late to regret what is gone and passed; but I do think if I had stayed with the boats this would not have come to pass. Other men may be as good guides — I make no doubt they are; but then natur’ bestows its gifts, and some must be better than other some. I daresay poor Gilbert, who took my place, has suffered for his mistake.”

“He fell at my elbow,” the Sergeant answered in a low melancholy tone. “We have, indeed, all suffered for our mistakes.”

“No, no, Sergeant, I meant no condemnation on you; for men were never better commanded than yourn, in this very expedition. I never beheld a prettier flanking; and the way in which you carried your own boat up ag’in their howitzer might have taught Lundie himself a lesson.”

The eyes of the Sergeant brightened, and his face even wore an expression of military triumph, though it was of a degree that suited the humble sphere in which he had been an actor.

“’Twas not badly done, my friend,” said he; “and we carried their log breastwork by storm.”

“’Twas nobly done, Sergeant; though, I fear, when all the truth comes to be known, it will be found that these vagabonds have got their howitzer back ag’in. Well, well, put a stout heart upon it, and try to forget all that is disagreeable, and to remember only the pleasant part of the matter. That is your truest philosophy; ay, and truest religion too. If the inimy has got the howitzer ag’in, they’ve only got what belonged to them afore, and what we couldn’t help. They haven’t got the blockhouse yet, nor are they likely to get it, unless they fire it in the dark. Well, Sergeant, the Sarpent and I separated about ten miles down the river; for we thought it wisest not to come upon even a friendly camp without the usual caution. What has become of Chingachgook I cannot say; though Mabel tells me he is not far off, and I make no question the noble-hearted Delaware is doing his duty, although he is not now visible to our eyes. Mark my word, Sergeant, before this matter is over we shall hear of him at some critical time and that in a discreet and creditable manner. Ah, the Sarpent is indeed a wise and virtuous chief! and any white man might covet his gifts, though his rifle is not quite as sure as Killdeer, it must be

owned. Well, as I came near the island I missed the smoke, and that put me on my guard; for I knew that the men of the 55th were not cunning enough to conceal that sign, notwithstanding all that has been told them of its danger. This made me more careful, until I came in sight of this mockfisherman, as I've just told Mabel; and then the whole of their infernal arts was as plain before me as if I saw it on a map. I need not tell you, Sergeant, that my first thoughts were of Mabel; and that, finding she was in the block, I came here, in order to live or die in her company."

The father turned a gratified look upon his child; and Mabel felt a sinking of the heart that at such a moment she could not have thought possible, when she wished to believe all her concern centred in the situation of her parent. As the latter held out his hand, she took it in her own and kissed it. Then, kneeling at his side, she wept as if her heart would break.

"Mabel," said he steadily, "the will of God must be done. It is useless to attempt deceiving either you or myself; my time has come, and it is a consolation to me to die like a soldier. Lundie will do me justice; for our good friend Pathfinder will tell him what has been done, and how all came to pass. You do not forget our last conversation?"

"Nay, father, my time has probably come too," exclaimed Mabel, who felt just then as if it would be a relief to die. "I cannot hope to escape; and Pathfinder would do well to leave us, and return to the garrison with the sad news while he can."

"Mabel Dunham," said Pathfinder reproachfully, though he took her hand with kindness, "I have not deserved this. I know I am wild, and uncouth, and ungainly —"

"Pathfinder!"

"Well, well, we'll forget it; you did not mean it, you could not think it. It is useless now to talk of escaping, for the Sergeant cannot be moved; and the blockhouse must be defended, cost what it will. Maybe Lundie will get the tidings of our disaster, and send a party to raise the siege."

"Pathfinder — Mabel!" said the Sergeant, who had been writhing with pain until the cold sweat stood on his forehead; "come both to my side. You understand each other, I hope?"

"Father, say nothing of that; it is all as you wish."

"Thank God! Give me your hand, Mabel — here, Pathfinder, take it. I can do no more than give you the girl in this way. I know you will make her a kind husband. Do not wait on account of my death; but there will be a chaplain in the fort before the season closes, and let him marry you at once. My brother, if living, will wish to go back to his vessel, and then the child will have no protector. Mabel, your husband will have been my friend, and that will be some consolation to you, I hope."

"Trust this matter to me, Sergeant," put in Pathfinder; "leave it all in my hands as your dying request; and, depend on it, all will go as it should."

"I do, I do put all confidence in you, my trusty friend, and empower you to act as I could act myself in every particular. Mabel, child — hand me the water — you will never repent this night. Bless you, my daughter! God bless, and have you in His holy keeping!"

This tenderness was inexpressibly touching to one of Mabel's feelings; and she felt at that moment as if her future union with Pathfinder had received a solemnization that no ceremony of the Church could render more holy. Still, a weight, as that of a mountain, lay upon her heart, and she thought it would be happiness to die. Then followed a short pause, when the Sergeant, in broken sentences, briefly related what had passed since he parted with Pathfinder and the Delaware. The wind had come more favorable; and, instead of encamping on an island agreeably to the original intention, he had determined to continue, and reach the station that night. Their approach would have been unseen, and a portion of the calamity avoided, he thought, had they not grounded on the point of a neighboring island, where, no doubt, the noise made by the men in getting off the boat gave notice of their approach, and enabled the enemy to be in readiness to receive them. They had landed without the slightest suspicion of danger, though surprised at not finding a sentinel, and had actually left their arms in the boat, with the intention of first securing their knapsacks and provisions. The fire had been so close, that, notwithstanding the obscurity, it was very deadly. Every man had fallen, though two or three subsequently arose and disappeared. Four or five of the soldiers had been killed, or so nearly so as to survive but a few minutes; though, for some unknown reason, the enemy did not make the usual rush for the scalps. Sergeant Dunham fell with the others; and he had heard the voice of Mabel, as she rushed from the blockhouse. This frantic appeal aroused all his parental feelings, and had enabled him to crawl as far as the door of the building, where he had raised himself against the logs in the

manner already mentioned.

After this simple explanation was made, the Sergeant was so weak as to need repose, and his companions, while they ministered to his wants, suffered some time to pass in silence. Pathfinder took the occasion to reconnoitre from the loops and the roof, and he examined the condition of the rifles, of which there were a dozen kept in the building, the soldiers having used their regimental muskets in the expedition. But Mabel never left her father's side for an instant; and when, by his breathing, she fancied he slept, she bent her knees and prayed.

The half-hour that succeeded was awfully solemn and still. The moccasin of Pathfinder was barely heard overhead, and occasionally the sound of the breech of a rifle fell upon the floor, for he was busied in examining the pieces, with a view to ascertain the state of their charges and their primings. Beyond this, nothing was so loud as the breathing of the wounded man. Mabel's heart yearned to be in communication with the father she was so soon to lose, and yet she would not disturb his apparent repose. But Dunham slept not; he was in that state when the world suddenly loses its attractions, its illusions, and its power; and the unknown future fills the mind with its conjectures, its revelations, and its immensity. He had been a moral man for one of his mode of life, but he had thought little of this all-important moment. Had the din of battle been ringing in his ears, his martial ardor might have endured to the end; but there, in the silence of that nearly untenanted blockhouse, with no sound to enliven him, no appeal to keep alive factitious sentiment, no hope of victory to impel, things began to appear in their true colors, and this state of being to be estimated at its just value. He would have given treasures for religious consolation, and yet he knew not where to turn to seek it. He thought of Pathfinder, but he distrusted his knowledge. He thought of Mabel, but for the parent to appeal to the child for such succor appeared like reversing the order of nature. Then it was that he felt the full responsibility of the parental character, and had some clear glimpse of the manner in which he himself had discharged the trust towards an orphan child. While thoughts like these were rising in his mind, Mabel, who watched the slightest change in his breathing, heard a guarded knock at the door. Supposing it might be Chingachgook, she rose, undid two of the bars, and held the third in her hand, as she asked who was there. The answer was in her uncle's voice, and he implored her to give him instant admission. Without an instant of hesitation, she turned the bar, and Cap entered. He had barely passed the opening, when Mabel closed the door again, and secured it as before, for practice had rendered her expert in this portion of her duties.

The sturdy seaman, when he had made sure of the state of his brother-in-law, and that Mabel, as well as himself, was safe, was softened nearly to tears. His own appearance he explained by saying that he had been carelessly guarded, under the impression that he and the Quartermaster were sleeping under the fumes of liquor with which they had been plied with a view to keep them quiet in the expected engagement. Muir had been left asleep, or seeming to sleep; but Cap had run into the bushes on the alarm of the attack, and having found Pathfinder's canoe, had only succeeded, at that moment, in getting to the blockhouse, whither he had come with the kind intent of escaping with his niece by water. It is scarcely necessary to say that he changed his plan when he ascertained the state of the Sergeant, and the apparent security of his present quarters.

"If the worst comes to the worst, Master Pathfinder," said he, "we must strike, and that will entitle us to receive quarter. We owe it to our manhood to hold out a reasonable time, and to ourselves to haul down the ensign in season to make saving conditions. I wished Master Muir to do the same thing when we were captured by these chaps you call vagabonds — and rightly are they named, for viler vagabonds do not walk the earth —"

"You've found out their characters?" interrupted Pathfinder, who was always as ready to chime in with abuse of the Mingos as with the praises of his friends. "Now, had you fallen into the hands of the Delawares, you would have learned the difference."

"Well, to me they seem much of a muchness; blackguards fore and aft, always excepting our friend the Serpent, who is a gentleman for an Indian. But, when these savages made the assault on us, killing Corporal M'Nab and his men as if they had been so many rabbits, Lieutenant Muir and myself took refuge in one of the holes of this here island, of which there are so many among the rocks, and there we remained stowed away like two leaguers in a ship's hold, until we gave out for want of grub. A man may say that grub is the foundation of human nature. I desired the Quartermaster to make terms, for we could have defended ourselves for an hour or two in the place, bad as it was; but he declined, on the ground that the knaves wouldn't keep faith if any of them were hurt, and so there was no use in asking them to. I consented to strike, on two principles; one, that we might be said to have struck already, for running below is generally thought to be giving up the ship; and the other, that we had an enemy in our stomachs that was more formidable in his attacks than the enemy on

deck. Hunger is a d — ble circumstance, as any man who has lived on it eight-and-forty hours will acknowledge.”

“Uncle,” said Mabel in a mournful voice and with an expostulatory manner, “my poor father is sadly, sadly hurt!”

“True, Magnet, true; I will sit by him, and do my best at consolation. Are the bars well fastened, girl? for on such an occasion the mind should be tranquil and undisturbed.”

“We are safe, I believe, from all but this heavy blow of Providence.”

“Well, then, Magnet, do you go up to the floor above and try to compose yourself, while Pathfinder runs aloft and takes a look-out from the cross-trees. Your father may wish to say something to me in private, and it may be well to leave us alone. These are solemn scenes, and inexperienced people, like myself, do not always wish what they say to be overheard.”

Although the idea of her uncle’s affording religious consolation by the side of a death-bed certainly never obtruded itself on the imagination of Mabel, she thought there might be a propriety in the request with which she was unacquainted, and she complied accordingly. Pathfinder had already ascended to the roof to make his survey, and the brothers-in-law were left alone. Cap took a seat by the side of the Sergeant, and bethought him seriously of the grave duty he had before him. A silence of several minutes succeeded, during which brief space the mariner was digesting the substance of his intended discourse.

“I must say, Sergeant Dunham,” Cap at length commenced in his peculiar manner, “that there has been mismanagement somewhere in this unhappy expedition; and, the present being an occasion when truth ought to be spoken, and nothing but the truth, I feel it my duty to be say as much in plain language. In short, Sergeant, on this point there cannot well be two opinions; for, seaman as I am, and no soldier, I can see several errors myself, that it needs no great education to detect.”

“What would you have, brother Cap?” returned the other in a feeble voice; “what is done is done; and it is now too late to remedy it.”

“Very true, brother Dunham, but not to repent of it; the Good Book tells us it is never too late to repent; and I’ve always heard that this is the precious moment. If you’ve anything on your mind, Sergeant, hoist it out freely; for, you know, you trust it to a friend. You were my own sister’s husband, and poor little Magnet is my own sister’s daughter; and, living or dead, I shall always look upon you as a brother. It’s a thousand pities that you didn’t lie off and on with the boats, and send a canoe ahead to reconnoitre; in which case your command would have been saved, and this disaster would not have befallen us all. Well, Sergeant, we are *all* mortal; that is some consolation, I make no doubt; and if you go before a little, why, we must follow. Yes, that *must* give you consolation.”

“I know all this, brother Cap; and hope I’m prepared to meet a soldier’s fate — there is poor Mabel —”

“Ay, ay, that’s a heavy drag, I know; but you wouldn’t take her with you if you could, Sergeant; and so the better way is to make as light of the separation as you can. Mabel is a good girl, and so was her mother before her; she was my sister, and it shall be my care to see that her daughter gets a good husband, if our lives and scalps are spared; for I suppose no one would care about entering into a family that has no scalps.”

“Brother, my child is betrothed; she will become the wife of Pathfinder.”

“Well, brother Dunham, every man has his opinions and his manner of viewing things; and, to my notion, this match will be anything but agreeable to Mabel. I have no objection to the age of the man; I’m not one of them that thinks it necessary to be a boy to make a girl happy, but, on the whole, I prefer a man of about fifty for a husband; still there ought not to be any circumstance between the parties to make them unhappy. Circumstances play the devil with matrimony, and I set it down as one that Pathfinder don’t know as much as my niece. You’ve seen but little of the girl, Sergeant, and have not got the run of her knowledge; but let her pay it out freely, as she will do when she gets to be thoroughly acquainted, and you’ll fall in with but few schoolmasters that can keep their luffs in her company.”

“She’s a good child — a dear, good child,” muttered the Sergeant, his eyes filling with tears; “and it is my misfortune that I have seen so little of her.”

“She is indeed a good girl, and knows altogether too much for poor Pathfinder, who is a reasonable man and an experienced man in his own way; but who has no more idea of the main chance than you have of spherical trigonometry, Sergeant.”

“Ah, brother Cap, had Pathfinder been with us in the boats this sad affair might not have happened!”



"That is quite likely; for his worst enemy will allow that the man is a good guide; but then, Sergeant, if the truth must be spoken, you have managed this expedition in a loose way altogether. You should have hove-to off your haven, and sent in a boat to reconnoitre, as I told you before. That is a matter to be repented of, and I tell it to you, because truth, in such a case, ought to be spoken."

"My errors are dearly paid for, brother; and poor Mabel, I fear, will be the sufferer. I think, however, that the calamity would not have happened had there not been treason. I fear me, brother, that Jasper Eau-douce has played us false."

"That is just my notion; for this fresh-water life must sooner or later undermine any man's morals. Lieutenant Muir and myself talked this matter over while we lay in a bit of a hole out here, on this island; and we both came to the conclusion that nothing short of Jasper's treachery could have brought us all into this infernal scrape. Well, Sergeant, you had better compose your mind, and think of other matters; for, when a vessel is about to enter a strange port, it is more prudent to think of the anchorage inside than to be under-running all the events that have turned up during the v'y'ge. There's the log-book expressly to note all these matters in; and what stands there must form the column of figures that's to be posted up for or against us. How now, Pathfinder! is there anything in the wind, that you come down the ladder like an Indian in the wake of a scalp?"

The guide raised a finger for silence and then beckoned to Cap to ascend the first ladder, and to allow Mabel to take his place at the side of the Sergeant.

"We must be prudent, and we must be bold too," said he in a low voice. "The riptyles are in earnest in their intention to fire the block; for they know there is now nothing to be gained by letting it stand. I hear the voice of that vagabond Arrowhead among them, and he is urging them to set about their devilry this very night. We must be stirring, Saltwater, and doing too. Luckily there are four or five barrels of water in the block, and these are something towards a siege. My reckoning is wrong, too, or we shall yet reap some advantage from that honest fellow's, the Sarpent, being at liberty."

Cap did not wait for a second invitation; but, stealing away, he was soon in the upper room with Pathfinder, while Mabel took his post at the side of her father's humble bed. Pathfinder had opened a loop, having so far concealed the light that it would not expose him to a treacherous shot; and, expecting a summons, he stood with his face near the hole, ready to answer. The stillness that succeeded was at length broken by the voice of Muir.

"Master Pathfinder," called out the Scotchman, "a friend summons you to a parley. Come freely to one of the loops; for you've nothing to fear so long as you are in converse with an officer of the 55th."

"What is your will, Quartermaster? what is your will? I know the 55th, and believe it to be a brave regiment; though I rather incline to the 60th as my favorite, and to the Delawares more than to either; but what would you have, Quartermaster? It must be a pressing errand that brings you under the loops of a blockhouse at this hour of the night, with the sartainty of Killdeer being inside of it."

"Oh, you'll no' harm a friend, Pathfinder, I'm certain; and that's my security. You're a man of judgment, and have gained too great a name on this frontier for bravery to feel the necessity of foolhardiness to obtain a character. You'll very well understand, my good friend, there is as much credit to be gained by submitting gracefully, when resistance becomes impossible, as by obstinately holding out contrary to the rules of war. The enemy is too strong for us, my brave comrade, and I come to counsel you to give up the block, on condition of being treated as a prisoner of war."

"I thank you for this advice, Quartermaster, which is the more acceptable as it costs nothing; but I do not think it belongs to my gifts to yield a place like this while food and water last."

"Well, I'd be the last, Pathfinder, to recommend anything against so brave a resolution, did I see the means of maintaining it. But ye'll remember that Master Cap has fallen."

"Not he, not he!" roared the individual in question through another loop; "and so far from that, Lieutenant, he has risen to the height of this here fortification, and has no mind to put his head of hair into the hands of such barbers again, so long as he can help it. I look upon this blockhouse as a circumstance, and have no mind to throw it away."

"If that is a living voice," returned Muir, "I am glad to hear it; for we all thought the man had fallen in the late fearful confusion. But, Master Pathfinder, although ye're enjoying the society of our friend Cap — and a great pleasure do I know it to be, by the experience of two days and a night passed in a hole in the earth — we've lost that of Sergeant Dunham, who has fallen, with all the brave men he led in the late expedition. Lundie would have it so, though it would have been more discreet and becoming to send a commissioned officer in command. Dunham was a brave man, notwithstanding, and shall

have justice done his memory. In short, we have all acted for the best, and that is as much as could be said in favor of Prince Eugene, the Duke of Marlborough, or the great Earl of Stair himself.”

“You’re wrong ag’in, Quartermaster, you’re wrong ag’in,” answered Pathfinder, resorting to a ruse to magnify his force. “The Sergeant is safe in the block too, where one might say the whole family is collected.”

“Well I rejoice to hear it, for we had certainly counted the Sergeant among the slain. If pretty Mabel is in the block still, let her not delay an instant, for heaven’s sake, in quitting it, for the enemy is about to put it to the trial by fire. Ye know the potency of that dread element, and will be acting more like the discreet and experienced warrior ye’re universally allowed to be, in yielding a place you canna’ defend, than in drawing down ruin on yourself and companions.”

“I know the potency of fire, as you call it, Quartermaster; and am not to be told, at this late hour, that it can be used for something else besides cooking a dinner. But I make no doubt you’ve heard of the potency of Killdeer, and the man who attempts to lay a pile of brush against these logs will get a taste of his power. As for arrows, it is not in their gift to set this building on fire, for we’ve no shingles on our roof, but good solid logs and green bark, and plenty of water besides. The roof is so flat, too, as you know yourself, Quartermaster, that we can walk on it, and so no danger on that score while water lasts. I’m peaceable enough if let alone; but he who endivors to burn this block over my head will find the fire squinched in his own blood.”

“This is idle and romantic talk, Pathfinder, and ye’ll no maintain it yourself when ye come to meditate on the realities. I hope ye’ll no’ gainsay the loyalty or the courage of the 55th, and I feel convinced that a council of war would decide on the propriety of a surrender forthwith. Na, na, Pathfinder, foolhardiness is na mair like the bravery o’ Wallace or Bruce than Albany on the Hudson is like the old town of Edinbro’.”

“As each of us seems to have made up his mind, Quartermaster, more words are useless. If the riptyles near you are disposed to set about their hellish job, let them begin at once. They can burn wood, and I’ll burn powder. If I were an Indian at the stake, I suppose I could brag as well as the rest of them; but, my gifts and natur’ being both white, my turn is rather for doing than talking. You’ve said quite enough, considering you carry the king’s commission; and should we all be consumed, none of us will bear you any malice.”

“Pathfinder, ye’ll no’ be exposing Mabel, pretty Mabel Dunham, to sic’ a calamity!”

“Mabel Dunham is by the side of her wounded father, and God will care for the safety of a pious child. Not a hair of her head shall fall, while my arm and sight remain true; and though *you* may trust the Mingos, Master Muir, I put no faith in them. You’ve a knavish Tuscarora in your company there, who has art and malice enough to spoil the character of any tribe with which he consorts, though he found the Mingos ready ruined to his hands, I fear. But enough said; now let each party go to the use of his means and his gifts.”

Throughout this dialogue Pathfinder had kept his body covered, lest a treacherous shot should be aimed at the loop; and he now directed Cap to ascend to the roof in order to be in readiness to meet the first assault. Although the latter used sufficient diligence, he found no less than ten blazing arrows sticking to the bark, while the air was filled with the yells and whoops of the enemy. A rapid discharge of rifles followed, and the bullets came pattering against the logs, in a way to show that the struggle had indeed seriously commenced.

These were sounds, however, that appalled neither Pathfinder nor Cap, while Mabel was too much absorbed in her affliction to feel alarm. She had good sense enough, too, to understand the nature of the defences, and fully to appreciate their importance. As for her father, the familiar noises revived him; and it pained his child, at such a moment, to see that his glassy eye began to kindle, and that the blood returned to a cheek it had deserted, as he listened to the uproar. It was now Mabel first perceived that his reason began slightly to wander.

“Order up the light companies,” he muttered, “and let the grenadiers charge! Do they dare to attack us in our fort? Why does not the artillery open on them?”

At that instant the heavy report of a gun burst on the night; and the crashing of rending wood was heard, as a heavy shot tore the logs in the room above, and the whole block shook with the force of a shell that lodged in the work. The Pathfinder narrowly escaped the passage of this formidable missile as it entered; but when it exploded, Mabel could not suppress a shriek, for she supposed all over her head, whether animate or inanimate, destroyed. To increase her horror, her father shouted in a frantic voice to “charge!”

“Mabel,” said Pathfinder, with his head at the trap, “this is true Mingo work — more noise than injury. The vagabonds

have got the howitzer we took from the French, and have discharged it ag'in the block; but fortunately they have fired off the only shell we had, and there is an ind of its use for the present. There is some confusion among the stores up in this loft, but no one is hurt. Your uncle is still on the roof; and, as for myself, I've run the gauntlet of too many rifles to be skeary about such a thing as a howitzer, and that in Indian hands."

Mabel murmured her thanks, and tried to give all her attention to her father, whose efforts to rise were only counteracted by his debility. During the fearful minutes that succeeded, she was so much occupied with the care of the invalid that she scarcely heeded the clamor that reigned around her. Indeed, the uproar was so great, that, had not her thoughts been otherwise employed, confusion of faculties rather than alarm would probably have been the consequence.

Cap preserved his coolness admirably. He had a profound and increasing respect for the power of the savages, and even for the majesty of fresh water, it is true; but his apprehensions of the former proceeded more from his dread of being scalped and tortured than from any unmanly fear of death; and, as he was now on the deck of a house, if not on the deck of a ship, and knew that there was little danger of boarders, he moved about with a fearlessness and a rash exposure of his person that Pathfinder, had he been aware of the fact, would have been the first to condemn. Instead of keeping his body covered, agreeably to the usages of Indian warfare, he was seen on every part of the roof, dashing the water right and left, with the apparent steadiness and unconcern he would have manifested had he been a sail trimmer exercising his art in a battle afloat. His appearance was one of the causes of the extraordinary clamor among the assailants; who, unused to see their enemies so reckless, opened upon him with their tongues, like a pack that has the fox in view. Still he appeared to possess a charmed life; for, though the bullets whistled around him on every side, and his clothes were several times torn, nothing cut his skin. When the shell passed through the logs below, the old sailor dropped his bucket, waved his hat, and gave three cheers; in which heroic act he was employed as the dangerous missile exploded. This characteristic feat probably saved his life; for from that instant the Indians ceased to fire at him, and even to shoot their flaming arrows at the block, having taken up the notion simultaneously, and by common consent, that the "Saltwater" was mad; and it was a singular effect of their magnanimity never to lift a hand against those whom they imagined devoid of reason.

The conduct of Pathfinder was very different. Everything he did was regulated by the most exact calculation, the result of long experience and habitual thoughtfulness. His person was kept carefully out of a line with the loops, and the spot that he selected for his look-out was one quite removed from danger. This celebrated guide had often been known to lead forlorn hopes: he had once stood at the stake, suffering under the cruelties and taunts of savage ingenuity and savage ferocity without quailing; and legends of his exploits, coolness, and daring were to be heard all along that extensive frontier, or wherever men dwelt and men contended. But on this occasion, one who did not know his history and character might have thought his exceeding care and studied attention to self-preservation proceeded from an unworthy motive. But such a judge would not have understood his subject; the Pathfinder bethought him of Mabel, and of what might possibly be the consequences to that poor girl should any casualty befall himself. But the recollection rather quickened his intellect than changed his customary prudence. He was, in fact, one of those who was so unaccustomed to fear, that he never bethought him of the constructions others might put upon his conduct. But while in moments of danger he acted with the wisdom of the serpent, it was also with the simplicity of a child.

For the first ten minutes of the assault, Pathfinder never raised the breech of his rifle from the floor, except when he changed his own position, for he well knew that the bullets of the enemy were thrown away upon the massive logs of the work; and as he had been at the capture of the howitzer he felt certain that the savages had no other shell than the one found in it when the piece was taken. There existed no reason, therefore, to dread the fire of the assailants, except as a casual bullet might find a passage through a loophole. One or two of these accidents did occur, but the balls entered at an angle that deprived them of all chance of doing any injury so long as the Indians kept near the block; and if discharged from a distance, there was scarcely the possibility of one in a hundred's striking the apertures. But when Pathfinder heard the sound of mocassined feet and the rustling of brush at the foot of the building, he knew that the attempt to build a fire against the logs was about to be renewed. He now summoned Cap from the roof, where, indeed, all the danger had ceased, and directed him to stand in readiness with his water at a hole immediately over the spot assailed.

One less trained than our hero would have been in a hurry to repel this dangerous attempt also, and might have resorted to his means prematurely; not so with Pathfinder. His aim was not only to extinguish the fire, about which he felt little apprehension, but to give the enemy a lesson that would render him wary during the remainder of the night. In order to effect the latter purpose, it became necessary to wait until the light of the intended conflagration should direct his aim,

when he well knew that a very slight effort of his skill would suffice. The Iroquois were permitted to collect their heap of dried brush, to pile it against the block, to light it, and to return to their covers without molestation. All that Pathfinder would suffer Cap to do, was to roll a barrel filled with water to the hole immediately over the spot, in readiness to be used at the proper instant. That moment, however, did not arrive, in his judgment, until the blaze illuminated the surrounding bushes, and there had been time for his quick and practised eye to detect the forms of three or four lurking savages, who were watching the progress of the flames, with the cool indifference of men accustomed to look on human misery with apathy. Then, indeed, he spoke.

“Are you ready, friend Cap?” he asked. “The heat begins to strike through the crevices; and although these green logs are not of the fiery nature of an ill-tempered man, they may be kindled into a blaze if one provokes them too much. Are you ready with the barrel? See that it has the right cut, and that none of the water is wasted.”

“All ready!” answered Cap, in the manner in which a seaman replies to such a demand.

“Then wait for the word. Never be over-impatient in a critical time, nor fool-risky in a battle. Wait for the word.”

While the Pathfinder was giving these directions, he was also making his own preparations; for he saw it was time to act. Killdeer was deliberately raised, pointed, and discharged. The whole process occupied about half a minute, and as the rifle was drawn in the eye of the marksman was applied to the hole.

“There is one riptyle the less,” Pathfinder muttered to himself; “I’ve seen that vagabond afore, and know him to be a marceiless devil. Well, well! the man acted according to his gifts, and he has been rewarded according to his gifts. One more of the knaves, and that will sarve the turn for to-night. When daylight appears, we may have hotter work.”

All this time another rifle was being got ready; and as Pathfinder ceased, a second savage fell. This indeed sufficed; for, indisposed to wait for a third visitation from the same hand, the whole band, which had been crouching in the bushes around the block, ignorant of who was and who was not exposed to view, leaped from their covers and fled to different places for safety.

“Now, pour away, Master Cap,” said Pathfinder; “I’ve made my mark on the blackguards; and we shall have no more fires lighted to-night.”

“Scaldings!” cried Cap, upsetting the barrel, with a care that at once and completely extinguished the flames.

This ended the singular conflict; and the remainder of the night passed in peace. Pathfinder and Cap watched alternately, though neither can be said to have slept. Sleep indeed scarcely seemed necessary to them, for both were accustomed to protracted watchings; and there were seasons and times when the former appeared to be literally insensible to the demands of hunger and thirst and callous to the effects of fatigue.

Mabel watched by her father’s pallet, and began to feel how much our happiness in this world depends even on things that are imaginary. Hitherto she had virtually lived without a father, the connection with her remaining parent being ideal rather than positive; but now that she was about to lose him, she thought for the moment that the world would be a void after his death, and that she could never be acquainted with happiness again.



## CHAPTER 25.

*There was a roaring in the wind all night;  
The rain came heavily, and fell in floods;  
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;  
The birds are singing in the distant woods.*

—WORDSWORTH.

As the light returned, Pathfinder and Cap ascended again to the roof, with a view to reconnoitre the state of things once more on the island. This part of the blockhouse had a low battlement around it, which afforded a considerable protection to those who stood in its centre; the intention having been to enable marksmen to lie behind it and to fire over its top. By making proper use, therefore, of these slight defences — slight as to height, though abundantly ample as far as they went — the two look-outs commanded a pretty good view of the island, its covers excepted, and of most of the channels that led to the spot.

The gale was still blowing very fresh at south; and there were places in the river where its surface looked green and angry, though the wind had hardly sweep enough to raise the water into foam. The shape of the little island was nearly oval, and its greater length was from east to west. By keeping in the channels that washed it, in consequence of their several courses and of the direction of the gale, it would have been possible for a vessel to range past the island on either of its principal sides, and always to keep the wind very nearly abeam. These were the facts first noticed by Cap, and explained to his companion; for the hopes of both now rested on the chances of relief sent from Oswego. At this instant, while they stood gazing anxiously about them, Cap cried out, in his lusty, hearty manner,

“Sail, ho!”

Pathfinder turned quickly in the direction of his companion’s face; and there, sure enough, was just visible the object of the old sailor’s exclamation. The elevation enabled the two to overlook the low land of several of the adjacent islands; and the canvas of a vessel was seen through the bushes that fringed the shore of one that lay to the southward and westward. The stranger was under what seamen call low sail; but so great was the power of the wind, that her white outlines were seen flying past the openings of the verdure with the velocity of a fast-travelling horse — resembling a cloud driving in the heavens.

“That cannot be Jasper,” said Pathfinder in disappointment; for he did not recognize the cutter of his friend in the swift-passing object. “No, no, the lad is behind the hour; and that is some craft which the Frenchers have sent to aid their friends, the accursed Mingos.”

“This time you are out in your reckoning, friend Pathfinder, if you never were before,” returned Cap in a manner that had lost none of its dogmatism by the critical circumstances in which they were placed. “Fresh water or salt, that is the head of the *Scud*’s mainsail, for it is cut with a smaller gore than common; and then you can see that the gaff has been fished — quite neatly done, I admit, but fished.”

“I can see none of this, I confess,” answered Pathfinder, to whom even the terms of his companion were Greek.

“No! Well, I own that surprises me, for I thought your eyes could see anything! Now to me nothing is plainer than that gore and that fish; and I must say, my honest friend, that in your place I should apprehend that my sight was beginning to fail.”

“If Jasper is truly coming, I shall apprehend but little. We can make good the block against the whole Mingo nation for the next eight or ten hours; and with Eau-douce to cover the retreat, I shall despair of nothing. God send that the lad may not run alongside of the bank, and fall into an ambushment, as befell the Sergeant!”

“Ay, there’s the danger. There ought to have been signals concerted, and an anchorage-ground buoyed out, and even a quarantine station or a lazaretto would have been useful, could we have made these Minks-ho respect the laws. If the lad fetches up, as you say, anywhere in the neighborhood of this island, we may look upon the cutter as lost. And, after all, Master Pathfinder, ought we not to set down this same Jasper as a secret ally of the French, rather than as a friend of our own? I know the Sergeant views the matter in that light; and I must say this whole affair looks like treason.”

“We shall soon know, we shall soon know, Master Cap; for there, indeed, comes the cutter clear of the other island, and five minutes must settle the matter. It would be no more than fair, however, if we could give the boy some sign in the

way of warning. It is not right that he should fall into the trap without a notice that it has been laid."

Anxiety and suspense, notwithstanding, prevented either from attempting to make any signal. It was not easy, truly, to see how it could be done; for the *Scud* came foaming through the channel, on the weather side of the island, at a rate that scarcely admitted of the necessary time. Nor was any one visible on her deck to make signs to; even her helm seemed deserted, though her course was as steady as her progress was rapid.

Cap stood in silent admiration of a spectacle so unusual. But, as the *Scud* drew nearer, his practised eye detected the helm in play by means of tiller-ropes, though the person who steered was concealed. As the cutter had weatherboards of some little height, the mystery was explained, no doubt remaining that her people lay behind the latter, in order to be protected from the rifles of the enemy. As this fact showed that no force beyond that of the small crew could be on board, Pathfinder received his companion's explanation with an ominous shake of the head.

"This proves that the Sarpent has not reached Oswego," said he, "and that we are not to expect succor from the garrison. I hope Lundie has not taken it into his head to displace the lad, for Jasper Western would be a host of himself in such a strait. We three, Master Cap, ought to make a manful warfare: you, as a seaman, to keep up the intercourse with the cutter; Jasper, as a laker who knows all that is necessary to be done on the water; and I, with gifts that are as good as any among the Mingos, let me be what I may in other particulars. I say we ought to make a manful fight in Mabel's behalf."

"That we ought, and that we will," answered Cap heartily; for he began to have more confidence in the security of his scalp now that he saw the sun again. "I set down the arrival of the *Scud* as one circumstance, and the chances of Oh-deuce's honesty as another. This Jasper is a young man of prudence, you find; for he keeps a good offing, and seems determined to know how matters stand on the island before he ventures to bring up."

"I have it! I have it!" exclaimed Pathfinder, with exultation. "There lies the canoe of the Sarpent on the cutter's deck; and the chief has got on board, and no doubt has given a true account of our condition; for, unlike a Mingo, a Delaware is sartain to get a story right, or to hold his tongue."

"That canoe may not belong to the cutter," said the captious seaman. "Oh-deuce had one on board when he sailed."

"Very true, friend Cap; but if you know your sails and masts by your gores and fishes, I know my canoes and my paths by frontier knowledge. If you can see new cloth in a sail, I can see new bark in a canoe. That is the boat of the Sarpent, and the noble fellow has struck off for the garrison as soon as he found the block besieged, has fallen in with the *Scud*, and, after telling his story, has brought the cutter down here to see what can be done. The Lord grant that Jasper Western be still on board her!"

"Yes, yes; it might not be amiss; for, traitor or loyal, the lad has a handy way with him in a gale, it must be owned."

"And in coming over waterfalls!" said Pathfinder, nudging the ribs of his companion with an elbow, and laughing in his silent but hearty manner. "We will give the boy his due, though he scalps us all with his own hand."

The *Scud* was now so near, that Cap made no reply. The scene, just at that instant, was so peculiar, that it merits a particular description, which may also aid the reader in forming a more accurate nature of the picture we wish to draw.

The gale was still blowing violently. Many of the smaller trees bowed their tops, as if ready to descend to the earth, while the rushing of the wind through the branches of the groves resembled the roar of distant chariots.

The air was filled with leaves, which, at that late season, were readily driven from their stems, and flew from island to island like flights of birds. With this exception, the spot seemed silent as the grave. That the savages still remained, was to be inferred from the fact that their canoes, together with the boats of the 55th, lay in a group in the little cove that had been selected as a harbor. Otherwise, not a sign of their presence was to be detected. Though taken entirely by surprise by the cutter, the sudden return of which was altogether unlooked-for, so uniform and inbred were their habits of caution while on the war-path, that the instant an alarm was given every man had taken to his cover with the instinct and cunning of a fox seeking his hole. The same stillness reigned in the blockhouse; for though Pathfinder and Cap could command a view of the channel, they took the precaution necessary to lie concealed. The unusual absence of anything like animal life on board the *Scud*, too, was still more remarkable. As the Indians witnessed her apparently undirected movements, a feeling of awe gained a footing among them, and some of the boldest of their party began to distrust the issue of an expedition that had commenced so prosperously. Even Arrowhead, accustomed as he was to intercourse with the whites on both sides of the lakes, fancied there was something ominous in the appearance of this unmanned vessel, and he would gladly at that moment have been landed again on the main.

In the meantime the progress of the cutter was steady and rapid. She held her way mid-channel, now inclining to the gusts, and now rising again, like the philosopher that bends to the calamities of life to resume his erect attitude as they pass away, but always piling the water beneath her bows in foam. Although she was under so very short canvas, her velocity was great, and there could not have elapsed ten minutes between the time when her sails were first seen glancing past the trees and bushes in the distance and the moment when she was abreast of the blockhouse. Cap and Pathfinder leaned forward, as the cutter came beneath their eyrie, eager to get a better view of her deck, when, to the delight of both, Jasper Eau-douce sprang upon his feet and gave three hearty cheers. Regardless of all risk, Cap leaped upon the rampart of logs and returned the greeting, cheer for cheer. Happily, the policy of the enemy saved the latter; for they still lay quiet, not a rifle being discharged. On the other hand, Pathfinder kept in view the useful, utterly disregarding the mere dramatic part of warfare. The moment he beheld his friend Jasper, he called out to him with stentorian lungs —

“Stand by us, lad, and the day’s our own! Give ’em a grist in yonder bushes, and you’ll put ’em up like partridges.”

Part of this reached Jasper’s ears, but most was borne off to leeward on the wings of the wind. By the time this was said, the *Scud* had driven past, and in the next moment she was hid from view by the grove in which the blockhouse was partially concealed.

Two anxious minutes succeeded; but, at the expiration of that brief space, the sails were again gleaming through the trees, Jasper having wore, jibed, and hauled up under the lee of the island on the other tack. The wind was free enough, as has been already explained, to admit of this manoeuvre; and the cutter, catching the current under her lee bow, was breasted up to her course in a way that showed she would come out to windward of the island again without any difficulty. This whole evolution was made with the greatest facility, not a sheet being touched, the sails trimming themselves, the rudder alone controlling the admirable machine. The object appeared to be a reconnoissance. When, however, the *Scud* had made the circuit of the entire island, and had again got her weatherly position in the channel by which she had first approached, her helm was put down, and she tacked. The noise of the mainsail flapping when it filled, loose-reefed as it was, sounded like the report of a gun, and Cap trembled lest the seams should open.

“His Majesty gives good canvas, it must be owned,” muttered the old seaman; “and it must be owned, too, that boy handles his boat as if he were thoroughly bred! D—me, Master Pathfinder, if I believe, after all that has been reported in the matter, that this Mister Oh-deuce got his trade on this bit of fresh water.”

“He did; yes, he did. He never saw the ocean, and has come by his calling altogether up here on Ontario. I have often thought he has a nat’ral gift in the way of schooners and sloops, and have respected him accordingly. As for treason and lying and black-hearted vices, friend Cap, Jasper Western is as free as the most virtuous of the Delaware warriors; and if you crave to see a truly honest man, you must go among that tribe to discover him.”

“There he comes round!” exclaimed the delighted Cap, the *Scud* at this moment filling on her original tack; “and now we shall see what the boy would be at; he cannot mean to keep running up and down these passages, like a girl footing it through a country-dance.”

The *Scud* now kept so much away, that for a moment the two observers on the blockhouse feared Jasper meant to come-to; and the savages, in their lairs, gleamed out upon her with the sort of exultation that the crouching tiger may be supposed to feel as he sees his unconscious victim approach his bed. But Jasper had no such intention: familiar with the shore, and acquainted with the depth of water on every part of the island, he well knew that the *Scud* might be run against the bank with impunity, and he ventured fearlessly so near, that, as he passed through the little cove, he swept the two boats of the soldiers from their fastenings and forced them out into the channel, towing them with the cutter. As all the canoes were fastened to the two Dunham boats, by this bold and successful attempt the savages were at once deprived of the means of quitting the island, unless by swimming, and they appeared to be instantly aware of the very important fact. Rising in a body, they filled the air with yells, and poured in a harmless fire. While up in this unguarded manner, two rifles were discharged by their adversaries. One came from the summit of the block, and an Iroquois fell dead in his tracks, shot through the brain. The other came from the *Scud*. The last was the piece of the Delaware, but, less true than that of his friend, it only maimed an enemy for life. The people of the *Scud* shouted, and the savages sank again, to a man, as if it might be into the earth.

“That was the Sarpent’s voice,” said Pathfinder, as soon as the second piece was discharged. “I know the crack of his rifle as well as I do that of Killdeer. ’Tis a good barrel, though not sartain death. Well, well, with Chingachgook and Jasper

on the water, and you and I in the block, friend Cap, it will be hard if we don't teach these Mingo scamps the rationality of a fight."

All this time the *Scud* was in motion. As soon as he had reached the end of the island, Jasper sent his prizes adrift; and they went down before the wind until they stranded on a point half a mile to leeward. He then wore, and came stemming the current again, through the other passage. Those on the summit of the block could now perceive that something was in agitation on the deck of the *Scud*; and, to their great delight, just as the cutter came abreast of the principal cove, on the spot where most of the enemy lay, the howitzer which composed her sole armament was unmasked, and a shower of case-shot was sent hissing into the bushes. A bevy of quail would not have risen quicker than this unexpected discharge of iron hail put up the Iroquois; when a second savage fell by a messenger sent from Killdeer, and another went limping away by a visit from the rifle of Chingachgook. New covers were immediately found, however; and each party seemed to prepare for the renewal of the strife in another form. But the appearance of June, bearing a white flag, and accompanied by the French officer and Muir, stayed the hands of all, and was the forerunner of another parley. The negotiation that followed was held beneath the blockhouse; and so near it as at once to put those who were uncovered completely at the mercy of Pathfinder's unerring aim. Jasper anchored directly abeam; and the howitzer, too, was kept trained upon the negotiators: so that the besieged and their friends, with the exception of the man who held the match, had no hesitation about exposing their persons. Chingachgook alone lay in ambush; more, however, from habit than distrust.

"You've triumphed, Pathfinder," called out the Quartermaster, "and Captain Sanglier has come himself to offer terms. You'll no' be denying a brave enemy honorable retreat, when he has fought ye fairly, and done all the credit he could to king and country. Ye are too loyal a subject yourself to visit loyalty and fidelity with a heavy judgment. I am authorized to offer, on the part of the enemy, an evacuation of the island, a mutual exchange of prisoners, and a restoration of scalps. In the absence of baggage and artillery, little more can be done."

As the conversation was necessarily carried on in a high key, both on account of the wind and of the distance, all that was said was heard equally by those in the block and those in the cutter.

"What do you say to that, Jasper?" called out Pathfinder. "You hear the proposal. Shall we let the vagabonds go? Or shall we mark them, as they mark their sheep in the settlements, that we may know them again?"

"What has befallen Mabel Dunham?" demanded the young man, with a frown on his handsome face, that was visible even to those on the block. "If a hair of her head has been touched, it will go hard with the whole Iroquois tribe."

"Nay, nay, she is safe below, nursing a dying parent, as becomes her sex. We owe no grudge on account of the Sergeant's hurt, which comes of lawful warfare; and as for Mabel —"

"She is here!" exclaimed the girl herself, who had mounted to the roof the moment she found the direction things were taking — "she is here! And, in the name of our holy religion, and of that God whom we profess to worship in common, let there be no more bloodshed! Enough has been spilt already; and if these men will go away, Pathfinder — if they will depart peaceably, Jasper — oh, do not detain one of them! My poor father is approaching his end, and it were better that he should draw his last breath in peace with the world. Go, go, Frenchmen and Indians! We are no longer your enemies, and will harm none of you."

"Tut, tut, Magnet!" put in Cap; "this sounds religious, perhaps, or like a book of poetry; but it does not sound like common sense. The enemy is just ready to strike; Jasper is anchored with his broadside to bear, and, no doubt, with springs on his cables; Pathfinder's eye and hand are as true as the needle; and we shall get prize-money, head-money, and honor in the bargain, if you will not interfere for the next half-hour."

"Well," said Pathfinder, "I incline to Mabel's way of thinking. There *has* been enough blood shed to answer our purpose and to sarve the king; and as for honor, in that meaning, it will do better for young ensigns and recruits than for cool-headed, obsarvant Christian men. There is honor in doing what's right, and unhonor in doing what's wrong; and I think it wrong to take the life even of a Mingo, without a useful end in view, I do; and right to hear reason at all times. So, Lieutenant Muir, let us know what your friends the Frenchers and Indians have to say for themselves."

"My friends!" said Muir, starting; "you'll no' be calling the king's enemies my friends, Pathfinder, because the fortune of war has thrown me into their hands? Some of the greatest warriors, both of ancient and modern times, have been prisoners of war; and yon is Master Cap, who can testify whether we did not do all that men could devise to escape the calamity."



"Ay, ay," drily answered Cap; "escape is the proper word. We ran below and hid ourselves, and so discreetly, that we might have remained in the hole to this hour, had it not been for the necessity of re-stowing the bread lockers. You burrowed on that occasion, Quartermaster, as handily as a fox; and how the d —l you knew so well where to find the spot is a matter of wonder to me. A regular skulk on board ship does not trail aft more readily when the jib is to be stowed, than you went into that same hole."

"And did ye no' follow? There are moments in a man's life when reason ascends to instinct —"

"And men descend into holes," interrupted Cap, laughing in his boisterous way, while Pathfinder chimed in, in his peculiar manner. Even Jasper, though still filled with concern for Mabel, was obliged to smile. "They say the d —l wouldn't make a sailor if he didn't look aloft; and now it seems he'll not make a soldier if he doesn't look below!"

This burst of merriment, though it was anything but agreeable to Muir, contributed largely towards keeping the peace. Cap fancied he had said a thing much better than common; and that disposed him to yield his own opinion on the main point, so long as he got the good opinion of his companions on his novel claim to be a wit. After a short discussion, all the savages on the island were collected in a body, without arms, at the distance of a hundred yards from the block, and under the gun of the *Scud*; while Pathfinder descended to the door of the blockhouse and settled the terms on which the island was to be finally evacuated by the enemy. Considering all the circumstances, the conditions were not very discreditable to either party. The Indians were compelled to give up all their arms, even to their knives and tomahawks, as a measure of precaution, their force being still quadruple that of their foes. The French officer, Monsieur Sanglier, as he was usually styled, and chose to call himself, remonstrated against this act as one likely to reflect more discredit on his command than any other part of the affair; but Pathfinder, who had witnessed one or two Indian massacres, and knew how valueless pledges became when put in opposition to interest where a savage was concerned, was obdurate. The second stipulation was of nearly the same importance. It compelled Captain Sanglier to give up all his prisoners, who had been kept well guarded in the very hole or cave in which Cap and Muir had taken refuge. When these men were produced, four of them were found to be unhurt; they had fallen merely to save their lives, a common artifice in that species of warfare; and of the remainder, two were so slightly injured as not to be unfit for service. As they brought their muskets with them, this addition to his force immediately put Pathfinder at his ease; for, having collected all the arms of the enemy in the blockhouse, he directed these men to take possession of the building, stationing a regular sentinel at the door. The remainder of the soldiers were dead, the badly wounded having been instantly despatched in order to obtain the much-coveted scalps.

As soon as Jasper was made acquainted with the terms, and the preliminaries had been so far observed as to render it safe for him to be absent, he got the *Scud* under weigh; and, running down to the point where the boats had stranded, he took them in tow again, and, making a few stretches, brought them into the leeward passage. Here all the savages instantly embarked, when Jasper took the boats in tow a third time, and, running off before the wind, he soon set them adrift full a mile to leeward of the island. The Indians were furnished with but a single oar in each boat to steer with, the young sailor well knowing that by keeping before the wind they would land on the shores of Canada in the course of the morning.

Captain Sanglier, Arrowhead, and June alone remained, when this disposition had been made of the rest of the party: the former having certain papers to draw up and sign with Lieutenant Muir, who in his eyes possessed the virtues which are attached to a commission; and the latter preferring, for reasons of his own, not to depart in company with his late friends, the Iroquois. Canoes were detained for the departure of these three, when the proper moment should arrive.

In the meantime, or while the *Scud* was running down with the boats in tow, Pathfinder and Cap, aided by proper assistants, busied themselves with preparing a breakfast; most of the party not having eaten for four-and-twenty hours. The brief space that passed in this manner before the *Scud* came-to again was little interrupted by discourse, though Pathfinder found leisure to pay a visit to the Sergeant, to say a few friendly words to Mabel, and to give such directions as he thought might smooth the passage of the dying man. As for Mabel herself, he insisted on her taking some light refreshment; and, there no longer existing any motive for keeping it there, he had the guard removed from the block, in order that the daughter might have no impediment to her attentions to her father. These little arrangements completed, our hero returned to the fire, around which he found all the remainder of the party assembled, including Jasper.



## CHAPTER 26.

*You saw but sorrow in its waning form;  
A working sea remaining from a storm,  
Where now the weary waves roll o'er the deep,  
And faintly murmur ere they fall asleep.*

—DRYDEN.

Men accustomed to a warfare like that we have been describing are not apt to be much under the influence of the tender feelings while still in the field. Notwithstanding their habits, however, more than one heart was with Mabel in the block, while the incidents we are about to relate were in the course of occurrence; and even the indispensable meal was less relished by the hardest of the soldiers than it might have been had not the Sergeant been so near his end.

As Pathfinder returned from the block, he was met by Muir, who led him aside in order to hold a private discourse. The manner of the Quartermaster had that air of supererogatory courtesy about it which almost invariably denotes artifice; for, while physiognomy and phrenology are but lame sciences at the best, and perhaps lead to as many false as right conclusions, we hold that there is no more infallible evidence of insincerity of purpose, short of overt acts, than a face that smiles when there is no occasion, and the tongue that is out of measure smooth. Muir had much of this manner in common, mingled with an apparent frankness that his Scottish intonation of voice, Scottish accent, and Scottish modes of expression were singularly adapted to sustain. He owed his preferment, indeed, to a long-exercised deference to Lundie and his family; for, while the Major himself was much too acute to be the dupe of one so much his inferior in real talents and attainments, most persons are accustomed to make liberal concessions to the flatterer, even while they distrust his truth and are perfectly aware of his motives. On the present occasion, the contest in skill was between two men as completely the opposites of each other in all the leading essentials of character as very well could be. Pathfinder was as simple as the Quartermaster was practised; he was as sincere as the other was false, and as direct as the last was tortuous. Both were cool and calculating, and both were brave, though in different modes and degrees; Muir never exposing his person except for effect, while the guide included fear among the rational passions, or as a sensation to be deferred to only when good might come of it.

“My dearest friend,” Muir commenced — “for ye’ll be dearer to us all, by seventy and sevenfold, after your late conduct than ever ye were — ye’ve just established yourself in this late transaction. It’s true that they’ll not be making ye a commissioned officer, for that species of prefairment is not much in your line, nor much in your wishes, I’m thinking; but as a guide, and a counsellor, and a loyal subject, and an expert marksman, yer renown may be said to be full. I doubt if the commander-in-chief will carry away with him from America as much credit as will fall to yer share, and ye ought just to set down in content and enjoy yoursal’ for the remainder of yer days. Get married, man, without delay, and look to your precious happiness; for ye’ve no occasion to look any longer to your glory. Take Mabel Dunham, for Heaven’s sake, to your bosom, and ye’ll have both a bonnie bride and a bonnie reputation.”

“Why, Quartermaster, this is a new piece of advice to come from your mouth. They’ve told me I had a rival in you.”

“And ye had, man, and a formidable one, too, I can tell you — one that has never yet courted in vain, and yet one that has courted five times. Lundie twits me with four, and I deny the charge; but he little thinks the truth would outdo even his arithmetic. Yes, yes, ye had a rival, Pathfinder; but ye’ve one no longer in me. Ye’ve my hearty wishes for yer success with Mabel; and were the honest Sergeant likely to survive, ye might rely on my good word with him, too, for a certainty.”

“I feel your friendship, Quartermaster, I feel your friendship, though I have no great need of any favor with Sergeant Dunham, who has long been my friend. I believe we may look upon the matter to be as sartain as most things in war-time; for, Mabel and her father consenting, the whole 55th couldn’t very well put a stop to it. Ah’s me! The poor father will scarcely live to see what his heart has so long been set upon.”

“But he’ll have the consolation of knowing it will come to pass, in dying. Oh, it’s a great relief, Pathfinder, for the parting spirit to feel certain that the beloved ones left behind will be well provided for after its departure. All the Mistress Muirs have duly expressed that sentiment with their dying breaths.”

“All your wives, Quartermaster, have been likely to feel this consolation.”

“Out upon ye, man! I’d no’ thought ye such a wag. Well, well; pleasant words make no heart-burnings between auld

friends. If I cannot espouse Mabel, ye'll no object to my esteeming her, and speaking well of her, and of yoursal', too, on all suitable occasions and in all companies. But, Pathfinder, ye'll easily understand that a poor deevil who loses such a bride will probably stand in need of some consolation?"

"Quite likely, quite likely, Quartermaster," returned the simple-minded guide; "I know the loss of Mabel would be found heavy to be borne by myself. It may bear hard on your feelings to see us married; but the death of the Sergeant will be likely to put it off, and you'll have time to think more manfully of it, you will."

"I'll bear up against it; yes, I'll bear up against it, though my heart-strings crack! And ye might help me, man, by giving me something to do. Ye'll understand that this expedition has been of a very peculiar nature; for here am I, bearing the king's commission, just a volunteer, as it might be; while a mere orderly has had the command. I've submitted for various reasons, though my blood has boiled to be in authority, while ye war' battling, for the honor of the country and his Majesty's rights —"

"Quartermaster," interrupted the guide, "you fell so early into the enemy's hands that your conscience ought to be easily satisfied on that score; so take my advice, and say nothing about it."

"That's just my opinion, Pathfinder; we'll all say nothing about it. Sergeant Dunham is *hors de combat*—"

"Anan?" said the guide.

"Why, the Sergeant can command no longer, and it will hardly do to leave a corporal at the head of a victorious party like this; for flowers that will bloom in a garden will die on a heath; and I was just thinking I would claim the authority that belongs to one who holds a lieutenant's commission. As for the men, they'll no dare to raise any objection; and as for yoursal', my dear friend, now that ye've so much honor, and Mabel, and the consciousness of having done yer duty, which is more precious than all, I expect to find an ally rather than one to oppose the plan."

"As for commanding the soldiers of the 55th, Lieutenant, it is your right, I suppose, and no one here will be likely to gainsay it; though you've been a prisoner of war, and there are men who might stand out ag'in giving up their authority to a prisoner released by their own deeds. Still no one here will be likely to say anything hostile to your wishes."

"That's just it, Pathfinder; and when I come to draw up the report of our success against the boats, and the defence of the block, together with the general operations, including the capitulation, ye'll no' find any omission of your claims and merits."

"Tut for my claims and merits, Quartermaster! Lundie knows what I am in the forest and what I am in the fort; and the General knows better than he. No fear of me; tell your own story, only taking care to do justice by Mabel's father, who, in one sense, is the commanding officer at this very moment."

Muir expressed his entire satisfaction with this arrangement, as well as his determination to do justice by all, when the two went to the group assembled round the fire. Here the Quartermaster began, for the first time since leaving Oswego, to assume some of the authority that might properly be supposed to belong to his rank. Taking the remaining corporal aside, he distinctly told that functionary that he must in future be regarded as one holding the king's commission, and directed him to acquaint his subordinates with the new state of things. This change in the dynasty was effected without any of the usual symptoms of a revolution; for, as all well understood the Lieutenant's legal claims to command, no one felt disposed to dispute his orders. For reasons best known to themselves, Lundie and the Quartermaster had originally made a different disposition; and now, for reasons of his own, the latter had seen fit to change it. This was reasoning enough for soldiers, though the hurt received by Sergeant Dunham would have sufficiently explained the circumstance had an explanation been required.

All this time Captain Sanglier was looking after his own breakfast with the resignation of a philosopher, the coolness of a veteran, the ingenuity and science of a Frenchman, and the voracity of an ostrich. This person had now been in the colony some thirty years, having left France in some such situation in his own army as Muir filled in the 55th. An iron constitution, perfect obduracy of feeling, a certain address well suited to manage savages, and an indomitable courage, had early pointed him out to the commander-in-chief as a suitable agent to be employed in directing the military operations of his Indian allies. In this capacity, then, he had risen to the titular rank of captain; and with his promotion had acquired a portion of the habits and opinions of his associates with a facility and an adaptation of self which are thought in America to be peculiar to his countrymen. He had often led parties of the Iroquois in their predatory expeditions; and his conduct on such occasions exhibited the contradictory results of both alleviating the misery produced by this species of warfare, and of

augmenting it by the broader views and greater resources of civilization. In other words, he planned enterprises that, in their importance and consequences, much exceeded the usual policy of the Indians, and then stepped in to lessen some of the evils of his own creating. In short, he was an adventurer whom circumstances had thrown into a situation where the callous qualities of men of his class might readily show themselves for good or for evil; and he was not of a character to baffle fortune by any ill-timed squeamishness on the score of early impressions, or to trifle with her liberality by unnecessarily provoking her frowns through wanton cruelty. Still, as his name was unavoidably connected with many of the excesses committed by his parties, he was generally considered in the American provinces a wretch who delighted in bloodshed, and who found his greatest happiness in tormenting the helpless and the innocent; and the name of Sanglier, which was a sobriquet of his own adopting, or of Flint Heart, as he was usually termed on the borders, had got to be as terrible to the women and children of that part of the country as those of Butler and Brandt became at a later day.

The meeting between Pathfinder and Sanglier bore some resemblance to that celebrated interview between Wellington and Blucher which has been so often and graphically told. It took place at the fire; and the parties stood earnestly regarding each other for more than a minute without speaking. Each felt that in the other he saw a formidable foe; and each felt, while he ought to treat the other with the manly liberality due to a warrior, that there was little in common between them in the way of character as well as of interests. One served for money and preferment; the other, because his life had been cast in the wilderness, and the land of his birth needed his arm and experience. The desire of rising above his present situation never disturbed the tranquillity of Pathfinder; nor had he ever known an ambitious thought, as ambition usually betrays itself, until he became acquainted with Mabel. Since then, indeed, distrust of himself, reverence for her, and the wish to place her in a situation above that which he then filled, had caused him some uneasy moments; but the directness and simplicity of his character had early afforded the required relief; and he soon came to feel that the woman who would not hesitate to accept him for her husband would not scruple to share his fortunes, however humble. He respected Sanglier as a brave warrior; and he had far too much of that liberality which is the result of practical knowledge to believe half of what he had heard to his prejudice, for the most bigoted and illiberal on every subject are usually those who know nothing about it; but he could not approve of his selfishness, cold-blooded calculations, and least of all of the manner in which he forgot his "white gifts," to adopt those that were purely "red." On the other hand, Pathfinder was a riddle to Captain Sanglier. The latter could not comprehend the other's motives; he had often heard of his disinterestedness, justice, and truth; and in several instances they had led him into grave errors, on that principle by which a frank and open-mouthed diplomatist is said to keep his secrets better than one that is close-mouthed and wily.

After the two heroes had gazed at each other in the manner mentioned, Monsieur Sanglier touched his cap; for the rudeness of a border life had not entirely destroyed the courtesy of manner he had acquired in youth, nor extinguished that appearance of *bonhomie* which seems inbred in a Frenchman.

"Monsieur le Pathfinder," said he, with a very decided accent, though with a friendly smile, "*un militaire* honor *le courage, et la loyauté*. You speak Iroquois?"

"Ay, I understand the language of the riptyles, and can get along with it if there's occasion," returned the literal and truth-telling guide; "but it's neither a tongue nor a tribe to my taste. Wherever you find the Mingo blood, in my opinion, Master Flinty-heart, you find a knave. Well, I've seen you often, though it was in battle; and I must say it was always in the van. You must know most of our bullets by sight?"

"Nevvair, sair, your own; *une balle* from your honorable hand be sairtaine deat'. You kill my best warrior on some island."

"That may be, that may be; though I daresay, if the truth was known, they would turn out to be great rascals. No offence to you, Master Flinty-heart, but you keep desperate evil company."

"Yes, sair," returned the Frenchman, who, bent on saying that which was courteous himself, and comprehending with difficulty, was disposed to think he received a compliment, "you too good. But *un brave* always *comme ça*. What that mean? ha! what that *jeune homme* do?"

The hand and eye of Captain Sanglier directed the look of Pathfinder to the opposite side of the fire, where Jasper, just at that moment, had been rudely seized by two of the soldiers, who were binding his arms under the direction of Muir.

"What does that mean, indeed?" cried the guide, stepping forward and shoving the two subordinates away with a power of muscle that would not be denied. "Who has the heart to do this to Jasper Eau-douce? And who has the boldness

to do it before my eyes?"

"It is by my orders, Pathfinder," answered the Quartermaster, "and I command it on my own responsibility. Ye'll no' tak' on yourself to dispute the legality of orders given by one who bears the king's commission to the king's soldiers?"

"I'd dispute the king's words, if they came from the king's own mouth, did he say that Jasper deserves this. Has not the lad just saved all our scalps, taken us from defeat, and given us victory? No, no, Lieutenant; if this is the first use that you make of your authority, I, for one, will not respect it."

"This savors a little of insubordination," answered Muir; "but we can bear much from Pathfinder. It is true this Jasper has *seemed* to serve us in this affair, but we ought not to overlook past transactions. Did not Major Duncan himself denounce him to Sergeant Dunham before we left the post? Have we not seen sufficient with our own eyes to make sure of having been betrayed? And is it not natural, and almost necessary, to believe that this young man has been the traitor? Ah, Pathfinder! Ye'll no' be making yourself a great statesman or a great captain if you put too much faith in appearances. Lord bless me! Lord bless me! If I do not believe, could the truth be come at, as you often say yourself, Pathfinder, that hypocrisy is a more common vice than even envy, and that's the bane of human nature."

Captain Sanglier shrugged his shoulders; then he looked earnestly from Jasper towards the Quartermaster, and from the Quartermaster towards Jasper.

"I care not for your envy, or your hypocrisy, or even for your human natur'," returned Pathfinder. "Jasper Eau-douce is my friend; Jasper Eau-douce is a brave lad, and an honest lad, and a loyal lad; and no man of the 55th shall lay hands on him, short of Lundie's own orders, while I'm in the way to prevent it. You may have authority over your soldiers; but you have none over Jasper and me, Master Muir."

"*Bon!*" ejaculated Sanglier, the sound partaking equally of the energies of the throat and of the nose.

"Will ye no' hearken to reason, Pathfinder? Ye'll no' be forgetting our suspicions and judgments; and here is another circumstance to augment and aggravate them all. Ye can see this little bit of bunting; well, where should it be found but by Mabel Dunham, on the branch of a tree on this very island, just an hour or so before the attack of the enemy; and if ye'll be at the trouble to look at the fly of the *Scud's* ensign, ye'll just say that the cloth has been cut from out it. Circumstantial evidence was never stronger."

"*Ma foi, c'est un peu fort, ceci,*" growled Sanglier between his teeth.

"Talk to me of no ensigns and signals when I know the heart," continued the Pathfinder. "Jasper has the gift of honesty; and it is too rare a gift to be trifled with, like a Mingo's conscience. No, no; off hands, or we shall see which can make the stoutest battle; you and your men of the 55th, or the Serpent here, and Killdeer, with Jasper and his crew. You overrate your force, Lieutenant Muir, as much as you underrate Eau-douce's truth."

"*Tres bon!*"

"Well, if I must speak plainly, Pathfinder, I e'en must. Captain Sanglier here and Arrowhead, this brave Tuscarora, have both informed me that this unfortunate boy is the traitor. After such testimony you can no longer oppose my right to correct him, as well as the necessity of the act."

"*Scelerat,*" muttered the Frenchman.

"Captain Sanglier is a brave soldier, and will not gainsay the conduct of an honest sailor," put in Jasper. "Is there any traitor here, Captain Flinty-heart?"

"Ay," added Muir, "let him speak out then, since ye wish it, unhappy youth! That the truth may be known. I only hope that ye may escape the last punishment when a court will be sitting on your misdeeds. How is it, Captain; do ye, or do ye not, see a traitor amang us?"

"*Oui— yes, sair —bien sur.*"

"Too much lie!" said Arrowhead in a voice of thunder, striking the breast of Muir with the back of his own hand in a sort of ungovernable gesture; "where my warriors? — where Yengeese scalp? Too much lie!"

Muir wanted not for personal courage, nor for a certain sense of personal honor. The violence which had been intended only for a gesture he mistook for a blow; for conscience was suddenly aroused within him, and he stepped back a pace, extending his hand towards a gun. His face was livid with rage, and his countenance expressed the fell intention of his heart. But Arrowhead was too quick for him; with a wild glance of the eye the Tuscarora looked about him; then thrust

a hand beneath his own girdle, drew forth a concealed knife, and, in the twinkling of an eye, buried it in the body of the Quartermaster to the handle. As the latter fell at his feet, gazing into his face with the vacant stare of one surprised by death, Sanglier took a pinch of snuff, and said in a calm voice —

“*Voilà l'affaire finie; mais,*” shrugging his shoulders, “*ce n'est qu'un scelerat de moins.*”

The act was too sudden to be prevented; and when Arrowhead, uttering a yell, bounded into the bushes, the white men were too confounded to follow. Chingachgook, however, was more collected; and the bushes had scarcely closed on the passing body of the Tuscarora than they were again opened by that of the Delaware in full pursuit.

Jasper Western spoke French fluently, and the words and manner of Sanglier struck him.

“Speak, Monsieur,” said he in English; “*am* I the traitor?”

“*Le voilà,*” answered the cool Frenchman, “dat is our *espion*— our *agent*— our friend —*ma foi—c'était un grand scelerat—voici.*”

While speaking, Sanglier bent over the dead body, and thrust his hand into a pocket of the Quartermaster, out of which he drew a purse. Emptying the contents on the ground, several double-louis rolled towards the soldiers, who were not slow in picking them up. Casting the purse from him in contempt, the soldier of fortune turned towards the soup he had been preparing with so much care, and, finding it to his liking, he began to break his fast with an air of indifference that the most stoical Indian warrior might have envied.



## CHAPTER 27.

*The only amaranthian flower on earth  
Is virtue; the only lasting treasure, truth.*

—COWPER.

The reader must imagine some of the occurrences that followed the sudden death of Muir. While his body was in the hands of his soldiers, who laid it decently aside, and covered it with a greatcoat, Chingachgook silently resumed his place at the fire, and both Sanglier and Pathfinder remarked that he carried a fresh and bleeding scalp at his girdle. No one asked any questions; and the former, although perfectly satisfied that Arrowhead had fallen, manifested neither curiosity nor feeling. He continued calmly eating his soup, as if the meal had been tranquil as usual. There was something of pride and of an assumed indifference to fate, imitated from the Indians, in all this; but there was more that really resulted from practice, habitual self-command, and constitutional hardihood. With Pathfinder the case was a little different in feeling, though much the same in appearance. He disliked Muir, whose smooth-tongued courtesy was little in accordance with his own frank and ingenuous nature; but he had been shocked at his unexpected and violent death, though accustomed to similar scenes, and he had been surprised at the exposure of his treachery. With a view to ascertain the extent of the latter, as soon as the body was removed, he began to question the Captain on the subject. The latter, having no particular motive for secrecy now that his agent was dead, in the course of the breakfast revealed the following circumstances, which will serve to clear up some of the minor incidents of our tale.

Soon after the 55th appeared on the frontiers, Muir had volunteered his services to the enemy. In making his offers, he boasted of his intimacy with Lundie, and of the means it afforded of furnishing more accurate and important information than usual. His terms had been accepted, and Monsieur Sanglier had several interviews with him in the vicinity of the fort at Oswego, and had actually passed one entire night secreted in the garrison. Arrowhead, however, was the usual channel of communication; and the anonymous letter to Major Duncan had been originally written by Muir, transmitted to Frontenac, copied, and sent back by the Tuscarora, who was returning from that errand when captured by the *Scud*. It is scarcely necessary to add that Jasper was to be sacrificed in order to conceal the Quartermaster's treason, and that the position of the island had been betrayed to the enemy by the latter. An extraordinary compensation — that which was found in his purse — had induced him to accompany the party under Sergeant Dunham, in order to give the signals that were to bring on the attack. The disposition of Muir towards the sex was a natural weakness, and he would have married Mabel, or any one else who would accept his hand; but his admiration of her was in a great degree feigned, in order that he might have an excuse for accompanying the party without sharing in the responsibility of its defeat, or incurring the risk of having no other strong and seemingly sufficient motive. Much of this was known to Captain Sanglier, particularly the part in connection with Mabel, and he did not fail to let his auditors into the whole secret, frequently laughing in a sarcastic manner, as he revealed the different expedients of the luckless Quartermaster.

"*Touchez-la*," said the cold-blooded partisan, holding out his sinewy hand to Pathfinder, when he ended his explanations; "you be *honnete*, and dat is *beaucoup*. We tak' de spy as we tak' *la medicine*, for de good; *mais, je les deteste! Touchez-la*."

"I'll shake your hand, Captain, I will; for you're a lawful and nat'ral inimy," returned Pathfinder, "and a manful one; but the body of the Quartermaster shall never disgrace English ground. I did intend to carry it back to Lundie that he might play his bagpipes over it, but now it shall lie here on the spot where he acted his villainy, and have his own treason for a headstone. Captain Flinty-heart, I suppose this consorting with traitors is a part of a soldier's regular business; but, I tell you honestly, it is not to my liking, and I'd rather it should be you than I who had this affair on his conscience. What an awful sinner! To plot, right and left, ag'in country, friends, and the Lord! Jasper, boy, a word with you aside, for a single minute."

Pathfinder now led the young man apart; and, squeezing his hand, with the tears in his own eyes, he continued:

"You know me, Eau-douce, and I know you," said he, "and this news has not changed my opinion of you in any manner. I never believed their tales, though it looked solemn at one minute, I will own; yes, it did look solemn, and it made me feel solemn too. I never suspected you for a minute, for I know your gifts don't lie that-a-way; but, I must own, I didn't suspect the Quartermaster neither."

"And he holding his Majesty's commission, Pathfinder!"

"It isn't so much that, Jasper Western, it isn't so much that. He held a commission from God to act right, and to deal fairly with his fellow-creatures, and he has failed awfully in his duty."

"To think of his pretending love for one like Mabel, too, when he felt none."

"That was bad, sartainly; the fellow must have had Mingo blood in his veins. The man that deals unfairly by a woman can be but a mongrel, lad; for the Lord has made them helpless on purpose that we may gain their love by kindness and services. Here is the Sergeant, poor man, on his dying bed; he has given me his daughter for a wife, and Mabel, dear girl, she has consented to it; and it makes me feel that I have two welfares to look after, two natur's to care for, and two hearts to gladden. Ah's me, Jasper! I sometimes feel that I'm not good enough for that sweet child!"

Eau-douce had nearly gasped for breath when he first heard this intelligence; and, though he succeeded in suppressing any other outward signs of agitation, his cheek was blanched nearly to the paleness of death. Still he found means to answer not only with firmness, but with energy —

"Say not so, Pathfinder; you are good enough for a queen."

"Ay, ay, boy, according to your idees of my goodness; that is to say, I can kill a deer, or even a Mingo at need, with any man on the lines; or I can follow a forest-path with as true an eye, or read the stars, when others do not understand them. No doubt, no doubt, Mabel will have venison enough, and fish enough, and pigeons enough; but will she have knowledge enough, and will she have idees enough, and pleasant conversation enough, when life comes to drag a little, and each of us begins to pass for our true value?"

"If you pass for your value, Pathfinder, the greatest lady in the land would be happy with you. On that head you have no reason to feel afraid."

"Now, Jasper, I dare to say *you* think so, nay, I *know* you do; for it is nat'ral, and according to friendship, for people to look over-favorably at them they love. Yes, yes; if I had to marry you, boy, I should give myself no consarn about my being well looked upon, for you have always shown a disposition to see me and all I do with friendly eyes. But a young gal, after all, must wish to marry a man that is nearer to her own age and fancies, than to have one old enough to be her father, and rude enough to frighten her. I wonder, Jasper, that Mabel never took a fancy to you, now, rather than setting her mind on me."

"Take, a fancy to me, Pathfinder!" returned the young man, endeavoring to clear his voice without betraying himself; "what is there about me to please such a girl as Mabel Dunham? I have all that you find fault with in yourself, with none of that excellence that makes even the generals respect you."

"Well, well, it's all chance, say what we will about it. Here have I journeyed and guided through the woods female after female, and consorted with them in the garrisons, and never have I even felt an inclination for any, until I saw Mabel Dunham. It's true the poor Sergeant first set me to thinking about his daughter; but after we got a little acquainted like, I'd no need of being spoken to, to think of her night and day. I'm tough, Jasper; yes, I'm very tough; and I'm risolute enough, as you all know; and yet I do think it would quite break me down, now, to lose Mabel Dunham!"

"We will talk no more of it, Pathfinder," said Jasper, returning his friend's squeeze of the hand, and moving back towards the fire, though slowly, and in the manner of one who cared little where he went; "we will talk no more of it. You are worthy of Mabel, and Mabel is worthy of you — you like Mabel, and Mabel likes you — her father has chosen you for her husband, and no one has a right to interfere. As for the Quartermaster, his feigning love for Mabel is worse even than his treason to the king."

By this time they were so near the fire that it was necessary to change the conversation. Luckily, at that instant, Cap, who had been in the block in company with his dying brother-in-law, and who knew nothing of what had passed since the capitulation, now appeared, walking with a meditative and melancholy air towards the group. Much of that hearty dogmatism, that imparted even to his ordinary air and demeanor an appearance of something like contempt for all around him, had disappeared, and he seemed thoughtful, if not meek.

"This death, gentlemen," said he, when he had got sufficiently near, "is a melancholy business, make the best of it. Now, here is Sergeant Dunham, a very good soldier, I make no question, about to slip his cable; and yet he holds on to the better end of it, as if he was determined it should never run out of the hawse-hole; and all because he loves his daughter, it seems to me. For my part, when a friend is really under the necessity of making a long journey, I always wish him well and



happily off."

"You wouldn't kill the Sergeant before his time?" Pathfinder reproachfully answered. "Life is sweet, even to the aged; and, for that matter, I've known some that seemed to set much store by it when it got to be of the least value."

Nothing had been further from Cap's real thoughts than the wish to hasten his brother-in-law's end. He had found himself embarrassed with the duties of smoothing a deathbed, and all he had meant was to express a sincere desire that the Sergeant were happily rid of doubt and suffering. A little shocked, therefore, at the interpretation that had been put on his words, he rejoined with some of the asperity of the man, though rebuked by a consciousness of not having done his own wishes justice. "You are too old and too sensible a person, Pathfinder," said he, "to fetch a man up with a surge, when he is paying out his ideas in distress, as it might be. Sergeant Dunham is both my brother-in-law and my friend — that is to say, as intimate a friend as a soldier well can be with a seafaring man — and I respect and honor him accordingly. I make no doubt, moreover, that he has lived such a life as becomes a man, and there can be no great harm, after all, in wishing any one well berthed in heaven. Well! we are mortal, the best of us, that you'll not deny; and it ought to be a lesson not to feel pride in our strength and beauty. Where is the Quartermaster, Pathfinder? It is proper he should come and have a parting word with the poor Sergeant, who is only going a little before us."

"You have spoken more truth, Master Cap, than you've been knowing to, all this time. You might have gone further, notwithstanding, and said that we are mortal, the *worst* of us; which is quite as true, and a good deal more wholesome, than saying that we are mortal, the *best* of us. As for the Quartermaster's coming to speak a parting word to the Sergeant, it is quite out of the question, seeing that he has gone ahead, and that too with little parting notice to himself, or to any one else."

"You are not quite so clear as common in your language, Pathfinder. I know that we ought all to have solemn thoughts on these occasions, but I see no use in speaking in parables."

"If my words are not plain, the idee is. In short, Master Cap, while Sergeant Dunham has been preparing himself for a long journey, like a conscientious and honest man as he is, deliberately, the Quartermaster has started, in a hurry, before him; and, although it is a matter on which it does not become me to be very positive, I give it as my opinion that they travel such different roads that they will never meet."

"Explain yourself, my friend," said the bewildered seaman, looking around him in search of Muir, whose absence began to excite his distrust. "I see nothing of the Quartermaster; but I think him too much of a man to run away, now that the victory is gained. If the fight were ahead instead of in our wake, the case would be altered."

"There lies all that is left of him, beneath that greatcoat," returned the guide, who then briefly related the manner of the Lieutenant's death. "The Tuscarora was as venemous in his blow as a rattler, though he failed to give the warning," continued Pathfinder. "I've seen many a desperate fight, and several of these sudden outbreaks of savage temper; but never before did I see a human soul quit the body more unexpectedly, or at a worse moment for the hopes of the dying man. His breath was stopped with the lie on his lips, and the spirit might be said to have passed away in the very ardor of wickedness."

Cap listened with a gaping mouth; and he gave two or three violent hems, as the other concluded, like one who distrusted his own respiration.

"This is an uncertain and uncomfortable life of yours, Master Pathfinder, what between the fresh water and the savages," said he; "and the sooner I get quit of it, the higher will be my opinion of myself. Now you mention it, I will say that the man ran for that berth in the rocks, when the enemy first bore down upon us, with a sort of instinct that I thought surprising in an officer; but I was in too great a hurry to follow, to log the whole matter accurately. God bless me! God bless me! — a traitor, do you say, and ready to sell his country, and to a rascally Frenchman too?"

"To sell anything; country, soul, body, Mabel, and all our scalps; and no ways particular, I'll engage, as to the purchaser. The countrymen of Captain Flinty-heart here were the paymasters this time."

"Just like 'em; ever ready to buy when they can't thrash, and to run when they can do neither."

Monsieur Sanglier lifted his cap with ironical gravity, and acknowledged the compliment with an expression of polite contempt that was altogether lost on its insensible subject. But Pathfinder had too much native courtesy, and was far too just-minded, to allow the attack to go unnoticed.

"Well, well," he interposed, "to my mind there is no great difference 'atween an Englishman and a Frenchman, after

all. They talk different tongues, and live under different kings, I will allow; but both are human, and feel like human beings, when there is occasion for it."

Captain Flinty-heart, as Pathfinder called him, made another obeisance; but this time the smile was friendly, and not ironical; for he felt that the intention was good, whatever might have been the mode of expressing it. Too philosophical, however, to heed what a man like Cap might say or think, he finished his breakfast, without allowing his attention to be again diverted from that important pursuit.

"My business here was principally with the Quartermaster," Cap continued, as soon as he had done regarding the prisoner's pantomime. "The Sergeant must be near his end, and I have thought he might wish to say something to his successor in authority before he finally departed. It is too late, it would seem; and, as you say, Pathfinder, the Lieutenant has truly gone before."

"That he has, though on a different path. As for authority, I suppose the Corporal has now a right to command what's left of the 55th; though a small and worried, not to say frightened, party it is. But, if anything needs to be done, the chances are greatly in favor of my being called on to do it. I suppose, however, we have only to bury our dead; set fire to the block and the huts, for they stand in the enemy's territory by position, if not by law, and must not be left for their convenience. Our using them again is out of the question; for, now the Frenchers know where the island is to be found, it would be like thrusting the hand into a wolf-trap with our eyes wide open. This part of the work the Serpent and I will see to, for we are as practysed in retreats as in advances."

"All that is very well, my good friend. And now for my poor brother-in-law: though he is a soldier, we cannot let him slip without a word of consolation and a leave-taking, in my judgment. This has been an unlucky affair on every tack; though I suppose it is what one had a right to expect, considering the state of the times and the nature of the navigation. We must make the best of it, and try to help the worthy man to unmoor, without straining his messengers. Death is a circumstance, after all, Master Pathfinder, and one of a very general character too, seeing that we must all submit to it, sooner or later."

"You say truth, you say truth; and for that reason I hold it to be wise to be always ready. I've often thought, Saltwater, that he is the happiest who has the least to leave behind him when the summons comes. Now, here am I, a hunter and a scout and a guide, although I do not own a foot of land on 'arth, yet do I enjoy and possess more than the great Albany Patroon. With the heavens over my head to keep me in mind of the last great hunt, and the dried leaves beneath my feet, I tramp over the ground as freely as if I was its lord and owner; and what more need heart desire? I do not say that I love nothing that belongs to 'arth; for I do, though not much, unless it might be Mabel Dunham, that I can't carry with me. I have some pups at the higher fort that I vally considerable, though they are too noisy for warfare, and so we are compelled to live separate for awhile; and then I think it would grieve me to part with Killdeer; but I see no reason why we should not be buried in the same grave, for we are as near as can be of the same length — six feet to a hair's breadth; but, bating these, and a pipe that the Serpent gave me, and a few tokens received from travellers, all of which might be put in a pouch and laid under my head, when the order comes to march I shall be ready at a minute's warning; and, let me tell you, Master Cap, that's what I call a circumstance too."

"Tis just so with me," answered the sailor, as the two walked towards the block, too much occupied with their respective morality to remember at the moment the melancholy errand they were on; "that's just my way of feeling and reasoning. How often have I felt, when near shipwreck, the relief of not owning the craft! 'If she goes,' I have said to myself, 'why, my life goes with her, but not my property, and there's great comfort in that.' I've discovered, in the course of boxing about the world from the Horn to Cape North, not to speak of this run on a bit of fresh water, that if a man has a few dollars, and puts them in a chest under lock and key, he is pretty certain to fasten up his heart in the same till; and so I carry pretty much all I own in a belt round my body, in order, as I say, to keep the vitals in the right place. D—me, Pathfinder, if I think a man without a heart any better than a fish with a hole in his air-bag."

"I don't know how that may be, Master Cap; but a man without a conscience is but a poor creatur', take my word for it, as any one will discover who has to do with a Mingo. I trouble myself but little with dollars or half-joes, for these are the favoryte coin in this part of the world; but I can easily believe, by what I've seen of mankind, that if a man *has* a chest filled with either, he may be said to lock up his heart in the same box. I once hunted for two summers, during the last peace, and I collected so much peltry that I found my right feelings giving way to a craving after property; and if I have consarn in marrying Mabel, it is that I may get to love such things too well, in order to make her comfortable."

"You're a philosopher, that's clear, Pathfinder; and I don't know but you're a Christian."

"I should be out of humor with the man that gainsayed the last, Master Cap. I have not been Christianized by the Moravians, like so many of the Delawares, it is true; but I hold to Christianity and white gifts. With me, it is as on-creditable for a white man not to be a Christian as it is for a red-skin not to believe in his happy hunting-grounds; indeed, after allowing for difference in traditions, and in some variations about the manner in which the spirit will be occupied after death, I hold that a good Delaware is a good Christian, though he never saw a Moravian; and a good Christian a good Delaware, so far as natur 'is consarned. The Serpent and I talk these matters over often, for he has a hankerin' after Christianity —"

"The d —l he has!" interrupted Cap. "And what does he intend to do in a church with all the scalps he takes?"

"Don't run away with a false idee, friend Cap, don't run away with a false idee. These things are only skin-deep, and all depend on edication and nat'ral gifts. Look around you at mankind, and tell me why you see a red warrior here, a black one there, and white armies in another place? All this, and a great deal more of the same kind that I could point out, has been ordered for some special purpose; and it is not for us to fly in the face of facts and deny their truth. No, no; each color has its gifts, and its laws, and its traditions; and one is not to condemn another because he does not exactly comprehend it."

"You must have read a great deal, Pathfinder, to see things so clear as this," returned Cap, not a little mystified by his companion's simple creed. "It's all as plain as day to me now, though I must say I never fell in with these opinions before. What denomination do you belong to, my friend?"

"Anan?"

"What sect do you hold out for? What particular church do you fetch up in?"

"Look about you, and judge for yourself. I'm in church now; I eat in church, drink in church, sleep in church. The 'arth is the temple of the Lord, and I wait on Him hourly, daily, without ceasing, I humbly hope. No, no, I'll not deny my blood and color; but am Christian born, and shall die in the same faith. The Moravians tried me hard; and one of the King's chaplains has had his say too, though that's a class no ways strenuous on such matters; and a missionary sent from Rome talked much with me, as I guided him through the forest, during the last peace; but I've had one answer for them all — I'm a Christian already, and want to be neither Moravian, nor Churchman, nor Papist. No, no, I'll not deny my birth and blood."

"I think a word from you might lighten the Sergeant over the shoals of death, Master Pathfinder. He has no one with him but poor Mabel; and she, you know, besides being his daughter, is but a girl and a child after all."

"Mabel is feeble in body, friend Cap; but in matters of this natur' I doubt if she may not be stronger than most men. But Sergeant Dunham is my friend, and he is your brother-in-law; so, now the press of fighting and maintaining our rights is over, it is fitting we should both go and witness his departure. I've stood by many a dying man, Master Cap," continued Pathfinder, who had a besetting propensity to enlarge on his experience, stopping and holding his companion by a button — "I've stood by many a dying man's side, and seen his last gasp, and heard his last breath; for, when the hurry and tumult of the battle is over, it is good to bethink us of the misfortunate, and it is remarkable to witness how differently human natur' feels at such solemn moments. Some go their way as stupid and ignorant as if God had never given them reason and an accountable state; while others quit us rejoicing, like men who leave heavy burthens behind them. I think that the mind sees clearly at such moments, my friend, and that past deeds stand thick before the recollection."

"I'll engage they do, Pathfinder. I have witnessed something of this myself, and hope I'm the better man for it. I remember once that I thought my own time had come, and the log was overhauled with a diligence I did not think myself capable of until that moment. I've not been a very great sinner, friend Pathfinder; that is to say, never on a large scale; though I daresay, if the truth were spoken, a considerable amount of small matters might be raked up against me, as well as against another man; but then, I've never committed piracy, nor high treason, nor arson, nor any of them sort of things. As to smuggling, and the like of that, why, I'm a seafaring man, and I suppose all callings have their weak spots. I daresay your trade is not altogether without blemish, honorable and useful as it seems to be?"

"Many of the scouts and guides are desperate knaves; and, like the Quartermaster here, some of them take pay of both sides. I hope I'm not one of them, though all occupations lead to temptations. Thrice have I been sorely tried in my life, and once I yielded a little, though I hope it was not in a matter to disturb a man's conscience in his last moments. The first time was when I found in the woods a pack of skins that I knowed belonged to a Frencher who was hunting on our side of the

lines, where he had no business to be; twenty-six as handsome beavers as ever gladdened human eyes. Well, that was a sore temptation; for I thought the law would have been almost with me, although it was in peace times. But then, I remembered that such laws wasn't made for us hunters, and bethought me that the poor man might have built great expectations for the next winter on the sale of his skins; and I left them where they lay. Most of our people said I did wrong; but the manner in which I slept that night convinced me that I had done right. The next trial was when I found the rifle that is sartainly the only one in this part of the world that can be calculated on as surely as Killdeer, and knowed that by taking it, or even hiding it, I might at once rise to be the first shot in all these parts. I was then young, and by no means so expart as I have since got to be, and youth is ambitious and striving; but, God be praised! I mastered that feeling; and, friend Cap, what is almost as good, I mastered my rival in as fair a shooting-match as was ever witnessed in a garrison; he with his piece, and I with Killdeer, and before the General in person too!" Here Pathfinder stopped to laugh, his triumph still glittering in his eyes and glowing on his sunburnt and browned cheek. "Well, the next conflict with the devil was the hardest of them all; and that was when I came suddenly upon a camp of six Mingos asleep in the woods, with their guns and horns piled in away that enabled me to get possession of them without waking a miscreant of them all. What an opportunity that would have been for the Serpent, who would have despatched them, one after another, with his knife, and had their six scalps at his girdle, in about the time it takes me to tell you the story. Oh, he's a valiant warrior, that Chingachgook, and as honest as he's brave, and as good as he's honest!"

"And what may *you* have done in this matter, Master Pathfinder?" demanded Cap, who began to be interested in the result; "it seems to me you had made either a very lucky, or a very unlucky landfall."

"'Twas lucky, and 'twas unlucky, if you can understand that. 'Twas unlucky, for it proved a desperate trial; and yet 'twas lucky, all things considered, in the ind. I did not touch a hair of their heads, for a white man has no nat'ral gifts to take scalps; nor did I even make sure of one of their rifles. I distrusted myself, knowing that a Mingo is no favorite in my own eyes."

"As for the scalps, I think you were right enough, my worthy friend; but as for the armament and the stores, they would have been condemned by any prize-court in Christendom."

"That they would, that they would; but then the Mingos would have gone clear, seeing that a white man can no more attack an unarmed than a sleeping inimy. No, no, I did myself, and my color, and my religion too, greater justice. I waited till their nap was over, and they well on their war-path again; and, by ambushing them here and flanking them there, I peppered the blackguards intrinsically like" (Pathfinder occasionally caught a fine word from his associates, and used it a little vaguely), "that only one ever got back to his village, and he came into his wigwam limping. Luckily, as it turned out, the great Delaware had only halted to jerk some venison, and was following on my trail; and when he got up he had five of the scoundrels' scalps hanging where they ought to be; so, you see, nothing was lost by doing right, either in the way of honor or in that of profit."

Cap grunted an assent, though the distinctions in his companion's morality, it must be owned, were not exactly clear to his understanding. The two had occasionally moved towards the block as they conversed, and then stopped again as some matter of more interest than common brought them to a halt. They were now so near the building, however, that neither thought of pursuing the subject any further; but each prepared himself for the final scene with Sergeant Dunham.



## CHAPTER 28.

*Thou barraine ground, whom winter's wrath hath wasted,  
Art made a mirror to behold my plight:  
Whilome thy fresh spring flower'd: and after hasted  
Thy summer prowde, with daffodillies dight;  
And now is come thy winter's stormy state,  
Thy mantle mar'd wherein thou maskedst late.*

—SPENSER.

Although the soldier may regard danger and even death with indifference in the tumult of battle, when the passage of the soul is delayed to moments of tranquillity and reflection the change commonly brings with it the usual train of solemn reflections; of regrets for the past, and of doubts and anticipations for the future. Many a man has died with a heroic expression on his lips, but with heaviness and distrust at his heart; for, whatever may be the varieties of our religious creeds, let us depend on the mediation of Christ, the dogmas of Mahomet, or the elaborated allegories of the East, there is a conviction, common to all men, that death is but the stepping-stone between this and a more elevated state of being. Sergeant Dunham was a brave man; but he was departing for a country in which resolution could avail him nothing; and as he felt himself gradually loosened from the grasp of the world, his thoughts and feelings took the natural direction; for if it be true that death is the great leveller, in nothing is it more true than that it reduces all to the same views of the vanity of life.

Pathfinder, though a man of peculiar habits and opinions, was always thoughtful, and disposed to view the things around him with a shade of philosophy, as well as with seriousness. In him, therefore, the scene in the blockhouse awakened no very novel feelings. But the case was different with Cap: rude, opinionated, dogmatical, and boisterous, the old sailor was little accustomed to view even death with any approach to the gravity which its importance demands; and notwithstanding all that had passed, and his real regard for his brother-in-law, he now entered the room of the dying man with much of that callous unconcern which was the fruit of long training in a school that, while it gives so many lessons in the sublimest truths, generally wastes its admonitions on scholars who are little disposed to profit by them.

The first proof that Cap gave of his not entering so fully as those around him into the solemnity of the moment, was by commencing a narration of the events which had just led to the deaths of Muir and Arrowhead. "Both tripped their anchors in a hurry, brother Dunham," he concluded; "and you have the consolation of knowing that others have gone before you in the great journey, and they, too, men whom you've no particular reason to love; which to me, were I placed in your situation, would be a source of very great satisfaction. My mother always said, Master Pathfinder, that dying people's spirits should not be damped, but that they ought to be encouraged by all proper and prudent means; and this news will give the poor fellow a great lift, if he feels towards them savages any way as I feel myself."

June arose at this intelligence, and stole from the blockhouse with a noiseless step. Dunham listened with a vacant stare, for life had already lost so many of its ties that he had really forgotten Arrowhead, and cared nothing for Muir; but he inquired, in a feeble voice, for Eau-douce. The young man was immediately summoned, and soon made his appearance. The Sergeant gazed at him kindly, and the expression of his eyes was that of regret for the injury he had done him in thought. The party in the blockhouse now consisted of Pathfinder, Cap, Mabel, Jasper, and the dying man. With the exception of the daughter, all stood around the Sergeant's pallet, in attendance in his last moments. Mabel kneeled at his side, now pressing a clammy hand to her head, now applying moisture to the parched lips of her father.

"Your case will shortly be ourn, Sergeant," said Pathfinder, who could hardly be said to be awestruck by the scene, for he had witnessed the approach and victories of death too often for that; but who felt the full difference between his triumphs in the excitement of battle and in the quiet of the domestic circle; "and I make no question we shall meet ag'in hereafter. Arrowhead has gone his way, 'tis true; but it can never be the way of a just Indian. You've seen the last of him, for his path cannot be the path of the just. Reason is ag'in the thought in his case, as it is also, in my judgment, ag'in it too in the case of Lieutenant Muir. You have done your duty in life; and when a man does that, he may start on the longest journey with a light heart and an actyve foot."

"I hope so, my friend: I've tried to do my duty."

"Ay, ay," put in Cap; "intention is half the battle; and though you would have done better had you hove-to in the offing

and sent a craft in to feel how the land lay, things might have turned out differently: no one here doubts that you meant all for the best, and no one anywhere else, I should think, from what I've seen of this world and read of t'other."

"I did; yes. I meant all for the best."

"Father! Oh, my beloved father!"

"Magnet is taken aback by this blow, Master Pathfinder, and can say or do but little to carry her father over the shoals; so we must try all the harder to serve him a friendly turn ourselves."

"Did you speak, Mabel?" Dunham asked, turning his eyes in the direction of his daughter, for he was already too feeble to turn his body.

"Yes, father; rely on nothing you have done yourself for mercy and salvation; trust altogether in the blessed mediation of the Son of God!"

"The chaplain has told us something like this, brother. The dear child may be right."

"Ay, ay, that's doctrine, out of question. He will be our Judge, and keeps the log-book of our acts, and will foot them all up at the last day, and then say who has done well and who has done ill. I do believe Mabel is right; but then you need not be concerned, as no doubt the account has been fairly kept."

"Uncle! — Dearest father! this is a vain illusion! Oh, place all your trust in the mediation of our Holy Redeemer! Have you not often felt your own insufficiency to effect your own wishes in the commonest things? And how can you imagine yourself, by your own acts, equal to raise up a frail and sinful nature sufficiently to be received into the presence of perfect purity? There is no hope for any but in the mediation of Christ!"

"This is what the Moravians used to tell us," said Pathfinder to Cap in a low voice; "rely on it, Mabel is right."

"Right enough, friend Pathfinder, in the distances, but wrong in the course. I'm afraid the child will get the Sergeant adrift, at the very moment when we had him in the best of the water and in the plainest part of the channel."

"Leave it to Mabel, leave it to Mabel; she knows better than any of us, and can do no harm."

"I have heard this before," Dunham at length replied. "Ah, Mabel! it is strange for the parent to lean on the child at a moment like this!"

"Put your trust in God, father; lean on His holy and compassionate Son. Pray, dearest, dearest father; pray for His omnipotent support."

"I am not used to prayer. Brother, Pathfinder — Jasper, can you help me to words?"

Cap scarcely knew what prayer meant, and he had no answer to give. Pathfinder prayed often, daily, if not hourly; but it was mentally, in his own simple modes of thinking, and without the aid of words at all. In this strait, therefore, he was as useless as the mariner, and had no reply to make. As for Jasper Eau-douce, though he would gladly have endeavored to move a mountain to relieve Mabel, this was asking assistance it exceeded his power to give; and he shrank back with the shame that is only too apt to overcome the young and vigorous, when called on to perform an act that tacitly confesses their real weakness and dependence on a superior power.

"Father," said Mabel, wiping her eyes, and endeavoring to compose features that were pallid, and actually quivering with emotion, "I will pray with you, for you, for *myself*; for us *all*. The petition of the feeblest and humblest is never unheeded."

There was something sublime, as well as much that was supremely touching, in this act of filial piety. The quiet but earnest manner in which this young creature prepared herself to perform the duty; the self-abandonment with which she forgot her sex's timidity and sex's shame, in order to sustain her parent at that trying moment; the loftiness of purpose with which she directed all her powers to the immense object before her, with a woman's devotion and a woman's superiority to trifles, when her affections make the appeal; and the holy calm into which her grief was compressed, rendered her, for the moment, an object of something very like awe and veneration to her companions.

Mabel had been religiously educated; equally without exaggeration and without self-sufficiency. Her reliance on God was cheerful and full of hope, while it was of the humblest and most dependent nature. She had been accustomed from childhood to address herself to the Deity in prayer; taking example from the Divine mandate of Christ Himself, who commanded His followers to abstain from vain repetitions, and who has left behind Him a petition which is unequalled for sublimity, as if expressly to rebuke the disposition of man to set up his own loose and random thoughts as the most

acceptable sacrifice. The sect in which she had been reared has furnished to its followers some of the most beautiful compositions in the language, as a suitable vehicle for its devotion and solicitations. Accustomed to this mode of public and even private prayer, the mind of our heroine had naturally fallen into its train of lofty thought; her task had become improved by its study, and her language elevated and enriched by its phrases. When she knelt at the bedside of her father, the very reverence of her attitude and manner prepared the spectators for what was to come; and as her affectionate heart prompted her tongue, and memory came in aid of both, the petition and praises that she offered up were of a character which might have worthily led the spirits of angels. Although the words were not slavishly borrowed, the expressions partook of the simple dignity of the liturgy to which she had been accustomed, and was probably as worthy of the Being to whom they were addressed as they could well be made by human powers. They produced their full impression on the hearers; for it is worthy of remark, that, notwithstanding the pernicious effects of a false taste when long submitted to, real sublimity and beauty are so closely allied to nature that they generally find an echo in every heart.

But when our heroine came to touch upon the situation of the dying man, she became the most truly persuasive; for then she was the most truly zealous and natural. The beauty of the language was preserved, but it was sustained by the simple power of love; and her words were warmed by a holy zeal, that approached to the grandeur of true eloquence. We might record some of her expressions, but doubt the propriety of subjecting such sacred themes to a too familiar analysis, and refrain.

The effect of this singular but solemn scene was different on the different individuals present. Dunham himself was soon lost in the subject of the prayer; and he felt some such relief as one who finds himself staggering on the edge of a precipice, under a burthen difficult to be borne, might be supposed to experience when he unexpectedly feels the weight removed, in order to be placed on the shoulders of another better able to sustain it. Cap was surprised, as well as awed; though the effects on his mind were not very deep or very lasting. He wondered a little at his own sensations, and had his doubts whether they were so manly and heroic as they ought to be; but he was far too sensible of the influence of truth, humility, religious submission, and human dependency, to think of interposing with any of his crude objections. Jasper knelt opposite to Mabel, covered his face, and followed her words, with an earnest wish to aid her prayers with his own; though it may be questioned if his thoughts did not dwell quite as much on the soft, gentle accents of the petitioner as on the subject of her petition.

The effect on Pathfinder was striking and visible: visible, because he stood erect, also opposite to Mabel; and the workings of his countenance, as usual, betrayed the workings of the spirit within. He leaned on his rifle, and at moments the sinewy fingers grasped the barrel with a force that seemed to compress the weapon; while, once or twice, as Mabel's language rose in intimate association with her thoughts, he lifted his eyes to the floor above him, as if he expected to find some visible evidence of the presence of the dread Being to whom the words were addressed. Then again his feelings reverted to the fair creature who was thus pouring out her spirit, in fervent but calm petitions, in behalf of a dying parent; for Mabel's cheek was no longer pallid, but was flushed with a holy enthusiasm, while her blue eyes were upturned in the light, in a way to resemble a picture by Guido. At these moments all the honest and manly attachment of Pathfinder glowed in his ingenuous features, and his gaze at our heroine was such as the fondest parent might fasten on the child of his love.

Sergeant Dunham laid his hand feebly on the head of Mabel as she ceased praying, and buried her face in his blanket.

"Bless you, my beloved child! bless you!" he rather whispered than uttered aloud; "this is truly consolation: would that I too could pray!"

"Father, you know the Lord's Prayer; you taught it to me yourself while I was yet an infant."

The Sergeant's face gleamed with a smile, for he *did* remember to have discharged that portion at least of the paternal duty, and the consciousness of it gave him inconceivable gratification at that solemn moment. He was then silent for several minutes, and all present believed that he was communing with God.

"Mabel, my child!" he at length uttered, in a voice which seemed to be reviving — "Mabel, I'm quitting you." The spirit at its great and final passage appears ever to consider the body as nothing. "I'm quitting you, my child; where is your hand?"

"Here, dearest father — here are both — oh, take both!"

"Pathfinder," added the Sergeant, feeling on the opposite side of the bed, where Jasper still knelt, and getting one of the hands of the young man by mistake, "take it — I leave you as her father — as you and she may please — bless you —

bless you both!"

At that awful instant, no one would rudely apprise the Sergeant of his mistake; and he died a minute or two later, holding Jasper's and Mabel's hands covered by both his own. Our heroine was ignorant of the fact until an exclamation of Cap's announced the death of her father; when, raising her face, she saw the eyes of Jasper riveted on her own, and felt the warm pressure of his hand. But a single feeling was predominant at that instant, and Mabel withdrew to weep, scarcely conscious of what had occurred. The Pathfinder took the arm of Eau-douce, and he left the block.

The two friends walked in silence past the fire, along the glade, and nearly reached the opposite shore of the island in profound silence. Here they stopped, and Pathfinder spoke.

"'Tis all over, Jasper," said he — "'tis all over. Ah's me! Poor Sergeant Dunham has finished his march, and that, too, by the hand of a venomous Mingo. Well, we never know what is to happen, and his luck may be yours or mine to-morrow or next day!"

"And Mabel? What is to become of Mabel, Pathfinder?"

"You heard the Sergeant's dying words; he has left his child in my care, Jasper; and it is a most solemn trust, it is; yes — it is a most solemn trust."

"It's a trust, Pathfinder, of which any man would be glad to relieve you," returned the youth, with a bitter smile.

"I've often thought it has fallen into wrong hands. I'm not consaited, Jasper; I'm not consaited, I do think I'm not; but if Mabel Dunham is willing to overlook all my imperfections and ignorances like, I should be wrong to gainsay it, on account of any sartainty I may have myself about my own want of merit."

"No one will blame you, Pathfinder, for marrying Mabel Dunham, any more than they will blame you for wearing a precious jewel in your bosom that a friend had freely given you."

"Do you think they'll blame Mabel, lad? I've had my misgivings about that, too; for all persons may not be so disposed to look at me with the same eyes as you and the Sergeant's daughter."

Jasper Eau-douce started as a man flinches at sudden bodily pain; but he otherwise maintained his self-command. "And mankind is envious and ill-natured, more particularly in and about the garrisons. I sometimes wish, Jasper, that Mabel could have taken a fancy to you — I do; and that you had taken a fancy to her; for it often seems to me that one like you, after all, might make her happier than I ever can."

"We will not talk about this, Pathfinder," interrupted Jasper hoarsely and impatiently; "you will be Mabel's husband, and it is not right to speak of any one else in that character. As for me, I shall take Master Cap's advice, and try and make a man of myself by seeing what is to be done on the salt water."

"You, Jasper Western! — you quit the lakes, the forests, and the lines; and this, too, for the towns and wasty ways of the settlements, and a little difference in the taste of the water. Haven't we the salt-licks, if salt is necessary to you? and oughtn't man to be satisfied with what contents the other creatur's of God? I counted on you, Jasper, I counted on you, I did; and thought, now that Mabel and I intend to dwell in a cabin of our own, that some day you might be tempted to choose a companion too, and come and settle in our neighborhood. There is a beautiful spot, about fifty miles west of the garrison, that I had chosen in my mind for my own place of abode; and there is an excellent harbor about ten leagues this side of it where you could run in and out with the cutter at any leisure minute; and I'd even fancied you and your wife in possession of the one place, and Mabel and I in possession of t'other. We should be just a healthy hunt apart; and if the Lord ever intends any of His creaturs to be happy on 'arth, none could be happier than we four."

"You forget, my friend," answered Jasper, taking the guide's hand and forcing a friendly smile, "that I have no fourth person to love and cherish; and I much doubt if I ever shall love any other as I love you and Mabel."

"Thank'e, boy; I thank you with all my heart; but what you call love for Mabel is only friendship like, and a very different thing from what I feel. Now, instead of sleeping as sound as natur' at midnight, as I used to could, I dream nightly of Mabel Dunham. The young does sport before me; and when I raise Killdeer, in order to take a little venison, the animals look back, and it seems as if they all had Mabel's sweet countenance, laughing in my face, and looking as if they said, 'Shoot me if you dare!' Then I hear her soft voice calling out among the birds as they sing; and no later than the last nap I took, I bethought me, in fancy, of going over the Niagara, holding Mabel in my arms, rather than part from her. The bitterest moments I've ever known were them in which the devil, or some Mingo conjuror, perhaps, has just put into my head to fancy in dreams that Mabel is lost to me by some unaccountable calamity — either by changefulness or by violence."



"Oh, Pathfinder! If you think this so bitter in a dream, what must it be to one who feels its reality, and knows it all to be true, true, true? So true as to leave no hope; to leave nothing but despair!"

These words burst from Jasper as a fluid pours from the vessel that has been suddenly broken. They were uttered involuntarily, almost unconsciously, but with a truth and feeling that carried with them the instant conviction of their deep sincerity. Pathfinder started, gazed at his friend for full a minute like one bewildered, and then it was that, in despite of all his simplicity, the truth gleamed upon him. All know how corroborating proofs crowd upon the mind as soon as it catches a direct clue to any hitherto unsuspected fact; how rapidly the thoughts flow and premises tend to their just conclusions under such circumstances. Our hero was so confiding by nature, so just, and so much disposed to imagine that all his friends wished him the same happiness as he wished them, that, until this unfortunate moment, a suspicion of Jasper's attachment for Mabel had never been awakened in his bosom. He was, however, now too experienced in the emotions which characterize the passion; and the burst of feeling in his companion was too violent and too natural to leave any further doubt on the subject. The feeling that first followed this change of opinion was one of deep humility and exquisite pain. He bethought him of Jasper's youth, his higher claims to personal appearance, and all the general probabilities that such a suitor would be more agreeable to Mabel than he could possibly be himself. Then the noble rectitude of mind, for which the man was so distinguished, asserted its power; it was sustained by his rebuked manner of thinking of himself, and all that habitual deference for the rights and feelings of others which appeared to be inbred in his very nature. Taking the arm of Jasper, he led him to a log, where he compelled the young man to seat himself by a sort of irresistible exercise of his iron muscles, and where he placed himself at his side.

The instant his feelings had found vent, Eau-douce was both alarmed at, and ashamed of, their violence. He would have given all he possessed on earth could the last three minutes be recalled; but he was too frank by disposition and too much accustomed to deal ingenuously by his friend to think a moment of attempting further concealment, or of any evasion of the explanation that he knew was about to be demanded. Even while he trembled in anticipation of what was about to follow, he never contemplated equivocation.

"Jasper," Pathfinder commenced, in a tone so solemn as to thrill on every nerve in his listener's body, "this *has* surprised me! You have kinder feelings towards Mabel than I had thought; and, unless my own mistaken vanity and consait have cruelly deceived me, I pity you, boy, from my soul I do! Yes, I think I know how to pity any one who has set his heart on a creature like Mabel, unless he sees a prospect of her regarding him as he regards her. This matter must be cleared up, Eau-douce, as the Delawares say, until there shall not be a cloud 'atween us."

"What clearing up can it want, Pathfinder? I love Mabel Dunham, and Mabel Dunham does not love me; she prefers you for a husband; and the wisest thing I can do is to go off at once to the salt water, and try to forget you both."

"Forget me, Jasper! That would be a punishment I don't deserve. But how do you know that Mabel prefers *me*? How do you know it, lad? To me it seems impossible like!"

"Is she not to marry you, and would Mabel marry a man she does not love?"

"She has been hard urged by the Sergeant, she has; and a dutiful child may have found it difficult to withstand the wishes of a dying parent. Have you ever told Mabel that you preferred her, Jasper — that you bore her these feelings?"

"Never, Pathfinder. I would not do you that wrong."

"I believe you, lad, I do believe you; and I think you would now go off to the salt water, and let the scent die with you. But this must not be. Mabel shall hear all, and she shall have her own way, if my heart breaks in the trial, she shall. No words have ever passed 'atween you, then, Jasper?"

"Nothing of account, nothing direct. Still, I will own all my foolishness, Pathfinder; for I ought to own it to a generous friend like you, and there will be an end of it. You know how young people understand each other, or think they understand each other, without always speaking out in plain speech, and get to know each other's thoughts, or to think they know them, by means of a hundred little ways."

"Not I, Jasper, not I," truly answered the guide; for, sooth to say, his advances had never been met with any of that sweet and precious encouragement which silently marks the course of sympathy united to passion. "Not I, Jasper; I know nothing of all this. Mabel has always treated me fairly, and said what she has had to say in speech as plain as tongue could tell it."

"You have had the pleasure of hearing her say that she loved you, Pathfinder?"

“Why, no, Jasper, not just that in words. She has told me that we never could, never ought to be married; that *she* was not good enough for *me*, though she *did* say that she honored me and respected me. But then the Sergeant said it was always so with the youthful and timid; that her mother did so and said so afore her; and that I ought to be satisfied if she would consent on any terms to marry me, and therefore I have concluded that all was right, I have.”

In spite of all his friendship for the successful wooer, in spite of all his honest, sincere wished for his happiness, we should be unfaithful chroniclers did we not own that Jasper felt his heart bound with an uncontrollable feeling of delight at this admission. It was not that he saw or felt any hope connected with the circumstance; but it was grateful to the jealous covetousness of unlimited love thus to learn that no other ears had heard the sweet confessions that were denied its own.

“Tell me more of this manner of talking without the use of the tongue,” continued Pathfinder, whose countenance was becoming grave, and who now questioned his companion like one who seemed to anticipate evil in the reply. “I can and have conversed with Chingachgook, and with his son Uncas too, in that mode, afore the latter fell; but I didn’t know that young girls practysed this art, and, least of all, Mabel Dunham.”

“Tis nothing, Pathfinder. I mean only a look, or a smile, or a glance of the eye, or the trembling of an arm or a hand when the young woman has had occasion to touch me; and because I have been weak enough to tremble even at Mabel’s breath, or her brushing me with her clothes, my vain thoughts have misled me. I never spoke plainly to Mabel myself, and now there is no use for it, since there is clearly no hope.”

“Jasper,” returned Pathfinder simply, but with a dignity that precluded further remarks at the moment, “we will talk of the Sergeant’s funeral and of our own departure from this island. After these things are disposed of, it will be time enough to say more of the Sergeant’s daughter. This matter must be looked into, for the father left me the care of his child.”

Jasper was glad enough to change the subject, and the friends separated, each charged with the duty most peculiar to his own station and habits.

That afternoon all the dead were interred, the grave of Sergeant Dunham being dug in the centre of the glade, beneath the shade of a huge elm. Mabel wept bitterly at the ceremony, and she found relief in thus disburthening her sorrow. The night passed tranquilly, as did the whole of the following day, Jasper declaring that the gale was too severe to venture on the lake. This circumstance detained Captain Sanglier also, who did not quit the island until the morning of the third day after the death of Dunham, when the weather had moderated, and the wind had become fair. Then, indeed, he departed, after taking leave of the Pathfinder, in the manner of one who believed he was in company of a distinguished character for the last time. The two separated like those who respect one another, while each felt that the other was all enigma to himself.



## CHAPTER 29.

*Playful she turn'd that he might see  
The passing smile her cheek put on;  
But when she marked how mournfully  
His eyes met hers, that smile was gone.*  
LALLA ROOKH.

The occurrences of the last few days had been too exciting, and had made too many demands on the fortitude of our heroine, to leave her in the helplessness of grief. She mourned for her father, and she occasionally shuddered as she recalled the sudden death of Jennie, and all the horrible scenes she had witnessed; but on the whole she had aroused herself, and was no longer in the deep depression which usually accompanies grief. Perhaps the overwhelming, almost stupefying sorrow that crushed poor June, and left her for nearly twenty-four hours in a state of stupor, assisted Mabel in conquering her own feelings, for she had felt called on to administer consolation to the young Indian woman. This she had done in the quiet, soothing, insinuating way in which her sex usually exerts its influence on such occasions.

The morning of the third day was set for that on which the *Scud* was to sail. Jasper had made all his preparations; the different effects were embarked, and Mabel had taken leave of June, a painful and affectionate parting. In a word, all was ready, and every soul had left the island but the Indian woman, Pathfinder, Jasper, and our heroine. The former had gone into a thicket to weep, and the three last were approaching the spot where three canoes lay, one of which was the property of June, and the other two were in waiting to carry the others off to the *Scud*. Pathfinder led the way, but, when he drew near the shore, instead of taking the direction to the boats, he motioned to his companions to follow, and proceeded to a fallen tree which lay on the margin of the glade and out of view of those in the cutter. Seating himself on the trunk, he signed to Mabel to take her place on one side of him and to Jasper to occupy the other.

"Sit down here Mabel; sit down there, Eau-douce," he commenced, as soon as he had taken his own seat. "I've something that lies heavy on my mind, and now is the time to take it off, if it's ever to be done. Sit down, Mabel, and let me lighten my heart, if not my conscience, while I've the strength to do it."

The pause that succeeded lasted two or three minutes, and both the young people wondered what was to come next; the idea that Pathfinder could have any weight on his conscience seeming equally improbable to each.

"Mabel," our hero at length resumed, "we must talk plainly to each other afore we join your uncle in the cutter, where the Saltwater has slept every night since the last rally, for he says it's the only place in which a man can be sure of keeping the hair on his head, he does. Ah's me! What have I to do with these follies and sayings now? I try to be pleasant, and to feel light-hearted, but the power of man can't make water run up stream. Mabel, you know that the Sergeant, afore he left us, had settled it 'atween us two that we were to become man and wife, and that we were to live together and to love one another as long as the Lord was pleased to keep us both on 'arth; yes, and afterwards too?"

Mabel's cheeks had regained a little of their ancient bloom in the fresh air of the morning; but at this unlooked-for address they blanched again, nearly to the pallid hue which grief had imprinted there. Still, she looked kindly, though seriously, at Pathfinder and even endeavored to force a smile.

"Very true, my excellent friend," she answered; "this was my poor father's wish, and I feel certain that a whole life devoted to your welfare and comforts could scarcely repay you for all you have done for us."

"I fear me, Mabel, that man and wife needs be bound together by a stronger tie than such feelings, I do. You have done nothing for me, or nothing of any account, and yet my very heart yearns towards you, it does; and therefore it seems likely that these feelings come from something besides saving scalps and guiding through woods."

Mabel's cheek had begun to glow again; and though she struggled hard to smile, her voice trembled a little as she answered.

"Had we not better postpone this conversation, Pathfinder?" she said; "we are not alone; and nothing is so unpleasant to a listener, they say, as family matters in which he feels no interest."

"It's because we are not alone, Mabel, or rather because Jasper is with us, that I wish to talk of this matter. The Sergeant believed I might make a suitable companion for you, and, though I had misgivings about it — yes, I had many misgivings — he finally persuaded me into the idee, and things came round 'atween us, as you know. But, when you

promised your father to marry me, Mabel, and gave me your hand so modestly, but so prettily, there was one circumstance, as your uncle called it, that you didn't know; and I've thought it right to tell you what it is, before matters are finally settled. I've often taken a poor deer for my dinner when good venison was not to be found; but it's as nat'ral not to take up with the worst when the best may be had."

"You speak in a way, Pathfinder, that is difficult to be understood. If this conversation is really necessary, I trust you will be more plain."

"Well then, Mabel, I've been thinking it was quite likely, when you gave in to the Sergeant's wishes, that you did not know the natur' of Jasper Western's feelings towards you?"

"Pathfinder!" and Mabel's cheek now paled to the livid hue of death; then it flushed to the tint of crimson; and her whole frame shuddered. Pathfinder, however, was too intent on his own object to notice this agitation; and Eau-douce had hidden his face in his hands in time to shut out its view.

"I've been talking with the lad; and, on comparing his dreams with my dreams, his feelings with my feelings, and his wishes with my wishes, I fear we think too much alike consarning you for both of us to be very happy."

"Pathfinder, you forget; you should remember that we are betrothed!" said Mabel hastily, and in a voice so low that it required acute attention in the listeners to catch the syllables. Indeed the last word was not quite intelligible to the guide, and he confessed his ignorance by the usual —

"Anan?"

"You forget that we are to be married; and such allusions are improper as well as painful."

"Everything is proper that is right, Mabel; and everything is right that leads to justice and fair dealing; though it is *painful* enough, as you say, as I find on trial, I do. Now, Mabel, had you known that Eau-douce thinks of you in this way, maybe you never would have consented to be married to one as old and as uncomely as I am."

"Why this cruel trial, Pathfinder? To what can all this lead? Jasper Western thinks no such thing; he says nothing, he feels nothing."

"Mabel!" burst from out of the young man's lips, in a way to betray the uncontrollable nature of his emotions, though he uttered not another syllable.

Mabel buried her face in both her hands; and the two sat like a pair of guilty beings, suddenly detected in the commission of some crime which involved the happiness of a common patron. At that instant, perhaps, Jasper himself was inclined to deny his passion, through an extreme unwillingness to grieve his friend; while Mabel, on whom this positive announcement of a fact that she had rather unconsciously hoped than believed, came so unexpectedly, felt her mind momentarily bewildered; and she scarcely knew whether to weep or to rejoice. Still she was the first to speak; since Eau-douce could utter naught that would be disingenuous, or that would pain his friend.

"Pathfinder," said she, "you talk wildly. Why mention this at all?"

"Well, Mabel, if I talk wildly, I *am* half wild, you know, by natur', I fear, as well as by habit." As he said this, he endeavored to laugh in his usual noiseless way, but the effect produced a strange and discordant sound; and it appeared nearly to choke him. "Yes, I *must* be wild; I'll not attempt to deny it."

"Dearest Pathfinder! my best, almost my only friend! You *cannot, do not* think I intended to say that!" interrupted Mabel, almost breathless in her haste to relieve his mortification. "If courage, truth, nobleness of soul and conduct, unyielding principles, and a hundred other excellent qualities can render any man respectable, esteemed, or beloved, your claims are inferior to those of no other human being."

"What tender and bewitching voices they have, Jasper!" resumed the guide, now laughing freely and naturally. "Yes, natur' seems to have made them on purpose to sing in our ears, when the music of the woods is silent. But we must come to a right understanding, we must. I ask you again, Mabel, if you had known that Jasper Western loves you as well as I do, or better perhaps, though that is scarcely possible; that in his dreams he sees your face in the water of the lake; that he talks to you, and of you, in his sleep; fancies all that is beautiful like Mabel Dunham, and all that is good and virtuous; believes he never knowed happiness until he knowed you; could kiss the ground on which you have trod, and forgets all the joys of his calling to think of you and the delight of gazing at your beauty and in listening to your voice, would you then have consented to marry me?"

Mabel could not have answered this question if she would; but, though her face was buried in her hands, the tint of the rushing blood was visible between the openings, and the suffusion seemed to impart itself to her very fingers. Still nature asserted her power, for there was a single instant when the astonished, almost terrified girl stole a glance at Jasper, as if distrusting Pathfinder's history of his feelings, read the truth of all he said in that furtive look, and instantly concealed her face again, as if she would hide it from observation for ever.

"Take time to think, Mabel," the guide continued, "for it is a solemn thing to accept one man for a husband while the thoughts and wishes lead to another. Jasper and I have talked this matter over, freely and like old friends, and, though I always knowed that we viewed most things pretty much alike, I couldn't have thought that we regarded any particular object with the very same eyes, as it might be, until we opened our minds to each other about you. Now Jasper owns that the very first time he beheld you, he thought you the sweetest and winningestest creatur' he had ever met; that your voice sounded like murmuring water in his ears; that he fancied his sails were your garments fluttering in the wind; that your laugh haunted him in his sleep; and that ag'in and ag'in has he started up affrighted, because he has fancied some one wanted to force you out of the *Scud*, where he imagined you had taken up your abode. Nay, the lad has even acknowledged that he often weeps at the thought that you are likely to spend your days with another, and not with him."

"Jasper!"

"It's solemn truth, Mabel, and it's right you should know it. Now stand up, and choose 'atween us. I do believe Eau-douce loves you as well as I do myself; he has tried to persuade me that he loves you better, but that I will not allow, for I do not think it possible; but I will own the boy loves you, heart and soul, and he has a good right to be heard. The Sergeant left me your protector, and not your tyrant. I told him that I would be a father to you as well as a husband, and it seems to me no feeling father would deny his child this small privilege. Stand up, Mabel, therefore, and speak your thoughts as freely as if I were the Sergeant himself, seeking your good, and nothing else."

Mabel dropped her hands, arose, and stood face to face with her two suitors, though the flush that was on her cheeks was feverish, the evidence of excitement rather than of shame.

"What would you have, Pathfinder?" she asked; "Have I not already promised my poor father to do all you desire?"

"Then I desire this. Here I stand, a man of the forest and of little larning, though I fear with an ambition beyond my desarts, and I'll do my endivors to do justice to both sides. In the first place, it is allowed that, so far as feelings in your behalf are consarned, we love you just the same; Jasper thinks his feelings *must* be the strongest, but this I cannot say in honesty, for it doesn't seem to me that it *can* be true, else I would frankly and freely confess it, I would. So in this particular, Mabel, we are here before you on equal tarms. As for myself, being the oldest, I'll first say what little can be produced in my favor, as well as ag'in it. As a hunter, I do think there is no man near the lines that can outdo me. If venison, or bear's meat, or even birds and fish, should ever be scarce in our cabin, it would be more likely to be owing to natur' and Providence than to any fault of mine. In short, it does seem to me that the woman who depended on me would never be likely to want for food. But I'm fearful ignorant! It's true I speak several tongues, such as they be, while I'm very far from being expart at my own. Then, my years are greater than your own, Mabel; and the circumstance that I was so long the Sergeant's comrade can be no great merit in your eyes. I wish, too, I was more comely, I do; but we are all as natur' made us, and the last thing that a man ought to lament, except on very special occasions, is his looks. When all is remembered, age, looks, learning, and habits, Mabel, conscience tells me I ought to confess that I'm altogether unfit for you, if not downright unworthy; and I would give up the hope this minute, I would, if I didn't feel something pulling at my heart-strings which seems hard to undo."

"Pathfinder! Noble, generous Pathfinder!" cried our heroine, seizing his hand and kissing it with a species of holy reverence; "You do yourself injustice — you forget my poor father and your promise — you do not know *me*!"

"Now, here's Jasper," continued the guide, without allowing the girl's caresses to win him from his purpose, "with *him* the case is different. In the way of providing, as in that of loving, there's not much to choose 'atween us; for the lad is frugal, industrious, and careful. Then he is quite a scholar, knows the tongue of the Frenchers, reads many books, and some, I know, that you like to read yourself, can understand you at all times, which, perhaps, is more than I can say for myself."

"What of all this?" interrupted Mabel impatiently; "Why speak of it now — why speak of it at all?"

"Then the lad has a manner of letting his thoughts be known, that I fear I can never equal. If there's anything on 'arth

that would make my tongue bold and persuading, Mabel, I do think it's yourself; and yet in our late conversations Jasper has outdone me, even on this point, in a way to make me ashamed of myself. He has told me how simple you were, and how true-hearted, and kind-hearted; and how you looked down upon vanities, for though you might be the wife of more than one officer, as he thinks, that you cling to feeling, and would rather be true to yourself and natur' than a colonel's lady. He fairly made my blood warm, he did, when he spoke of your having beauty without seeming ever to have looked upon it, and the manner in which you moved about like a young fa'n, so nat'ral and graceful like, without knowing it; and the truth and justice of your ideas, and the warmth and generosity of your heart —"

"Jasper!" interrupted Mabel, giving way to feelings that had gathered an ungovernable force by being so long pent, and falling into the young man's willing arms, weeping like a child, and almost as helpless. "Jasper! Jasper! Why have you kept this from me?"

The answer of Eau-douce was not very intelligible, nor was the murmured dialogue that followed remarkable for coherency. But the language of affection is easily understood. The hour that succeeded passed like a very few minutes of ordinary life, so far as a computation of time was concerned; and when Mabel recollected herself, and bethought her of the existence of others, her uncle was pacing the cutter's deck in great impatience, and wondering why Jasper should be losing so much of a favorable wind. Her first thought was of him, who was so likely to feel the recent betrayal of her real emotions.

"Oh, Jasper," she exclaimed, like one suddenly self-convicted, "the Pathfinder!"

Eau-douce fairly trembled, not with unmanly apprehension, but with the painful conviction of the pang he had given his friend; and he looked in all directions in the expectation of seeing his person. But Pathfinder had withdrawn, with a tact and a delicacy that might have done credit to the sensibility and breeding of a courtier. For several minutes the two lovers sat, silently waiting his return, uncertain what propriety required of them under circumstances so marked and so peculiar. At length they beheld their friend advancing slowly towards them, with a thoughtful and even pensive air.

"I now understand what you meant, Jasper, by speaking without a tongue and hearing without an ear," he said when close enough to the tree to be heard. "Yes, I understand it now, I do; and a very pleasant sort of discourse it is, when one can hold it with Mabel Dunham. Ah's me! I told the Sergeant I wasn't fit for her; that I was too old, too ignorant, and too wild like; but he *would* have it otherwise."

Jasper and Mabel sat, resembling Milton's picture of our first parents, when the consciousness of sin first laid its leaden weight on their souls. Neither spoke, neither even moved; though both at that moment fancied they could part with their new-found happiness in order to restore their friend to his peace of mind. Jasper was pale as death, but, in Mabel, maiden modesty had caused the blood to mantle on her cheeks, until their bloom was heightened to a richness that was scarcely equalled in her hours of light-hearted buoyancy and joy. As the feeling which, in her sex, always accompanies the security of love returned, threw its softness and tenderness over her countenance, she was singularly beautiful. Pathfinder gazed at her with an intentness he did not endeavor to conceal, and then he fairly laughed in his own way, and with a sort of wild exultation, as men that are untutored are wont to express their delight. This momentary indulgence, however, was expiated by the pang which followed the sudden consciousness that this glorious young creature was lost to him for ever. It required a full minute for this simple-minded being to recover from the shock of this conviction; and then he recovered his dignity of manner, speaking with gravity, almost with solemnity.

"I have always known, Mabel Dunham, that men have their gifts," said he; "but I'd forgotten that it did not belong to mine to please the young, the beautiful, and l'arned. I hope the mistake has been no very heavy sin; and if it was, I've been heavily punished for it, I have. Nay, Mabel, I know what you'd say, but it's unnecessary; I *feel* it all, and that is as good as if I *heard* it all. I've had a bitter hour, Mabel. I've had a very bitter hour, lad."

"Hour!" echoed Mabel, as the other first used the word; the tell-tale blood, which had begun to ebb towards her heart, rushing again tumultuously to her very temples; "surely not an hour, Pathfinder?"

"Hour!" exclaimed Jasper at the same instant; "No, no, my worthy friend, it is not ten minutes since you left us!"

"Well, it may be so; though to me it has seemed to be a day. I begin to think, however, that the happy count time by minutes, and the miserable count it by months. But we will talk no more of this; it is all over now, and many words about it will make you no happier, while they will only tell me what I've lost; and quite likely how much I deserved to lose her. No, no, Mabel, 'tis useless to interrupt me; I admit it all, and your gainsaying it, though it be so well meant, cannot change my

mind. Well, Jasper, she is yours; and, though it's hard to think it, I do believe you'll make her happier than I could, for your gifts are better suited to do so, though I would have strived hard to do as much, if I know myself, I would. I ought to have known better than to believe the Sergeant; and I ought to have put faith in what Mabel told me at the head of the lake, for reason and judgment might have shown me its truth; but it is so pleasant to think what we wish, and mankind so easily over-persuade us, when we over-persuade ourselves. But what's the use in talking of it, as I said afore? It's true, Mabel seemed to be consenting, though it all came from a wish to please her father, and from being skeary about the savages —"

"Pathfinder!"

"I understand you, Mabel, and have no hard feelings, I haven't. I sometimes think I should like to live in your neighborhood, that I might look at your happiness; but, on the whole, it's better I should quit the 55th altogether, and go back to the 60th, which is my natyve rigiment, as it might be. It would have been better, perhaps, had I never left it, though my sarvices were much wanted in this quarter, and I'd been with some of the 55th years ago; Sergeant Dunham, for instance, when he was in another corps. Still, Jasper, I do not regret that I've known you —"

"And me, Pathfinder!" impetuously interrupted Mabel; "do you regret having known *me*? Could I think so, I should never be at peace with myself."

"You, Mabel!" returned the guide, taking the hand of our heroine and looking up into her countenance with guileless simplicity, but earnest affection; "How could I be sorry that a ray of the sun came across the gloom of a cheerless day — that light has broken in upon darkness, though it remained so short a time? I do not flatter myself with being able to march quite so light-hearted as I once used to could, or to sleep as sound, for some time to come; but I shall always remember how near I was to being undeservedly happy, I shall. So far from blaming you, Mabel, I only blame myself for being so vain as to think it possible I could please such a creatur'; for sartainly you told me how it was, when we talked it over on the mountain, and I ought to have believed you then; for I do suppose it's nat'ral that young women should know their own minds better than their fathers. Ah's me! It's settled now, and nothing remains but for me to take leave of you, that you may depart; I feel that Master Cap must be impatient, and there is danger of his coming on shore to look for us all."

"To take leave!" exclaimed Mabel.

"Leave!" echoed Jasper; "You do not mean to quit us, my friend?"

"Tis best, Mabel, 'tis altogether best, Eau-douce; and it's wisest. I could live and die in your company, if I only followed feeling; but, if I follow reason, I shall quit you here. You will go back to Oswego, and become man and wife as soon as you arrive — for all that is determined with Master Cap, who hankers after the sea again, and who knows what is to happen — while I shall return to the wilderness and my Maker. Come, Mabel," continued Pathfinder, rising and drawing nearer to our heroine, with grave decorum, "kiss me; Jasper will not grudge me one kiss; then we'll part."

"Oh, Pathfinder!" exclaimed Mabel, falling into the arms of the guide, and kissing his cheeks again and again, with a freedom and warmth she had been far from manifesting while held to the bosom of Jasper; "God bless you, dearest Pathfinder! You'll come to us hereafter. We shall see you again. When old, you will come to our dwelling, and let me be a daughter to you?"

"Yes, that's it," returned the guide, almost gasping for breath; "I'll try to think of it in that way. You're more befitting to be my daughter than to be my wife, you are. Farewell, Jasper. Now we'll go to the canoe; it's time you were on board."

The manner in which Pathfinder led the way to the shore was solemn and calm. As soon as he reached the canoe, he again took Mabel by the hands, held her at the length of his own arms, and gazed wistfully into her face, until the unbidden tears rolled out of the fountains of feeling and trickled down his rugged cheeks in streams.

"Bless me, Pathfinder," said Mabel, kneeling reverently at his feet. "Oh, at least bless me before we part!"

That untutored but noble-minded being did as she desired; and, aiding her to enter the canoe, seemed to tear himself away as one snaps a strong and obstinate cord. Before he retired, however, he took Jasper by the arm and led him a little aside, when he spoke as follows:—

"You're kind of heart and gentle by natur', Jasper; but we are both rough and wild in comparison with that dear creatur'. Be careful of her, and never show the roughness of man's natur' to her soft disposition. You'll get to understand her in time; and the Lord, who governs the lake and the forest alike, who looks upon virtue with a smile and upon vice with a frown, keep you happy and worthy to be so!"

Pathfinder made a sign for his friend to depart, and he stood leaning on his rifle until the canoe had reached the side

of the *Scud*. Mabel wept as if her heart would break; nor did her eyes once turn from the open spot in the glade, where the form of the Pathfinder was to be seen, until the cutter had passed a point that completely shut out the island. When last in view, the sinewy frame of this extraordinary man was as motionless as if it were a statue set up in that solitary place to commemorate the scenes of which it had so lately been the witness.





## CHAPTER 30.

*Oh! let me only breathe the air,  
The blessed air that's breath'd by thee;  
And, whether on its wings it bear  
Healing or death, 'tis sweet to me!*

—MOORE.

Pathfinder was accustomed to solitude; but, when the *Scud* had actually disappeared, he was almost overcome with a sense of his loneliness. Never before had he been conscious of his isolated condition in the world; for his feelings had gradually been accustoming themselves to the blandishments and wants of social life; particularly as the last were connected with the domestic affections. Now, all had vanished, as it might be, in one moment; and he was left equally without companions and without hope. Even Chingachgook had left him, though it was but temporarily; still his presence was missed at the precise instant which might be termed the most critical in our hero's life.

Pathfinder stood leaning on his rifle, in the attitude described in the last chapter, a long time after the *Scud* had disappeared. The rigidity of his limbs seemed permanent; and none but a man accustomed to put his muscles to the severest proof could have maintained that posture, with its marble-like inflexibility, for so great a length of time. At length he moved away from the spot; the motion of the body being preceded by a sigh that seemed to heave up from the very depths of his bosom.

It was a peculiarity of this extraordinary being that his senses and his limbs, for all practical purposes, were never at fault, let the mind be preoccupied with other interests as much as it might. On the present occasion neither of these great auxiliaries failed him; but, though his thoughts were exclusively occupied with Mabel, her beauty, her preference of Jasper, her tears, and her departure, he moved in a direct line to the spot where June still remained, which was the grave of her husband. The conversation that followed passed in the language of the Tuscaroras, which Pathfinder spoke fluently; but, as that tongue is understood only by the extremely learned, we shall translate it freely into the English; preserving, as far as possible, the tone of thought of each interlocutor, as well as the peculiarities of manner. June had suffered her hair to fall about her face, had taken a seat on a stone which had been dug from the excavation made by the grave, and was hanging over the spot which contained the body of Arrowhead, unconscious of the presence of any other. She believed, indeed, that all had left the island but herself, and the tread of the guide's moccasined foot was too noiseless rudely to undeceive her.

Pathfinder stood gazing at the woman for several minutes in mute attention. The contemplation of her grief, the recollection of her irreparable loss, and the view of her desolation produced a healthful influence on his own feelings; his reason telling him how much deeper lay the sources of grief in a young wife, who was suddenly and violently deprived of her husband, than in himself.

"Dew-of-June," he said solemnly, but with an earnestness which denoted the strength of his sympathy, "you are not alone in your sorrow. Turn, and let your eyes look upon a friend."

"June has no longer any friend!" the woman answered. "Arrowhead has gone to the happy hunting-grounds, and there is no one left to care for June. The Tuscaroras would chase her from their wigwams; the Iroquois are hateful in her eyes, and she could not look at them. No! Leave June to starve over the grave of her husband."

"This will never do — this will never do. 'Tis ag'in reason and right. You believe in the Manitou, June?"

"He has hid his face from June because he is angry. He has left her alone to die."

"Listen to one who has had a long acquaintance with red natur', though he has a white birth and white gifts. When the Manitou of a pale-face wishes to produce good in a pale-face heart He strikes it with grief; for it is in our sorrows, June, that we look with the truest eyes into ourselves, and with the farthest-sighted eyes too, as respects right. The Great Spirit wishes you well, and He has taken away the chief, lest you should be led astray by his wily tongue, and get to be a Mingo in your disposition, as you were already in your company."

"Arrowhead was a great chief," returned the woman proudly.

"He had his merits, he had; and he had his demerits, too. But June you are not desarted, nor will you be soon. Let your grief out — let it out, according to natur', and when the proper time comes I shall have more to say to you."

Pathfinder now went to his own canoe, and he left the island. In the course of the day June heard the crack of his rifle once or twice; and as the sun was setting he reappeared, bringing her birds ready cooked, and of a delicacy and flavor that might have tempted the appetite of an epicure. This species of intercourse lasted a month, June obstinately refusing to abandon the grave of her husband all that time, though she still accepted the friendly offerings of her protector. Occasionally they met and conversed, Pathfinder sounding the state of the woman's feelings; but the interviews were short, and far from frequent. June slept in one of the huts, and she laid down her head in security, for she was conscious of the protection of a friend, though Pathfinder invariably retired at night to an adjacent island, where he had built himself a hut.

At the end of the month, however, the season was getting to be too far advanced to render her situation pleasant to June. The trees had lost their leaves, and the nights were becoming cold and wintry. It was time to depart.

At this moment Chingachgook reappeared. He had a long and confidential interview on the island with his friend. June witnessed their movements, and she saw that her guardian was distressed. Stealing to his side, she endeavored to soothe his sorrow with a woman's gentleness and with a woman's instinct.

"Thank you, June, thank you!" he said; "'tis well meant, though it's useless. But it is time to quit this place. To-morrow we shall depart. You will go with us, for now you've got to feel reason."

June assented in the meek manner of an Indian woman, and she withdrew to pass the remainder of her time near the grave of Arrowhead. Regardless of the hour and the season, the young widow did not pillow her head during the whole of that autumnal night. She sat near the spot that held the remains of her husband, and prayed, in the manner of her people, for his success on the endless path on which he had so lately gone, and for their reunion in the land of the just. Humble and degraded as she would have seemed in the eyes of the sophisticated and unreflecting, the image of God was on her soul, and it vindicated its divine origin by aspirations and feelings that would have surprised those who, feigning more, feel less.

In the morning the three departed, Pathfinder earnest and intelligent in all he did, the Great Serpent silent and imitative, and June meek, resigned, but sorrowful. They went in two canoes, that of the woman being abandoned: Chingachgook led the way, and Pathfinder followed, the course being up stream. Two days they paddled westward, and as many nights they encamped on islands. Fortunately the weather became mild, and when they reached the lake it was found smooth and glassy as a pond. It was the Indian summer, and the calms, and almost the blandness of June, slept in the hazy atmosphere.

On the morning of the third day they passed the mouth of the Oswego, where the fort and the sleeping ensign invited them in vain to enter. Without casting a look aside, Chingachgook paddled past the dark waters of the river, and Pathfinder still followed in silent industry. The ramparts were crowded with spectators; but Lundie, who knew the persons of his old friends, refused to allow them to be even hailed.

It was noon when Chingachgook entered a little bay where the *Scud* lay at anchor, in a sort of roadstead. A small ancient clearing was on the shore; and near the margin of the lake was a log dwelling, recently and completely, though rudely fitted up. There was an air of frontier comfort and of frontier abundance around the place, though it was necessarily wild and solitary. Jasper stood on the shore; and when Pathfinder landed, he was the first to take him by the hand. The meeting was simple, but very cordial. No questions were asked, it being apparent that Chingachgook had made the necessary explanations. Pathfinder never squeezed his friend's hand more cordially than in this interview; and he even laughed cordially in his face as he told him how happy and well he appeared.

"Where is she, Jasper? Where is she?" the guide at length whispered, for at first he had seemed to be afraid to trust himself with the question.

"She is waiting for us in the house, my dear friend, where you see that June has already hastened before us."

"June may use a lighter step to meet Mabel, but she cannot carry a lighter heart. And so, lad, you found the chaplain at the garrison, and all was soon settled?"

"We were married within a week after we left you, and Master Cap departed next day. You have forgotten to inquire about your friend Saltwater."

"Not I, not I; the Serpent has told me all that: and then I love to hear so much of Mabel and her happiness, I do. Did the child smile or did she weep when the ceremony was over?"

"She did both, my friend; but —"

"Yes, that's their natur', tearful and cheerful. Ah's me! They are very pleasant to us of the woods; and I do believe I

should think all right, whatever Mabel might do. And do you think, Jasper, that she thought of me at all on that joyful occasion?"

"I know she did, Pathfinder; and she thinks of you and talks of you daily, almost hourly. None love you as we do."

"I know few love me better than yourself, Jasper: Chingachgook is perhaps, now, the only creatur' of whom I can say that. Well, there's no use in putting it off any longer; it must be done, and may as well be done at once; so, Jasper, lead the way, and I'll endeavor to look upon her sweet countenance once more."

Jasper did lead the way, and they were soon in the presence of Mabel. The latter met her late suitor with a bright blush, and her limbs trembled so, she could hardly stand; still her manner was affectionate and frank. During the hour of Pathfinder's visit (for it lasted no longer, though he ate in the dwelling of his friends), one who was expert in tracing the working of the human mind might have seen a faithful index to the feelings of Mabel in her manner to Pathfinder and her husband. With the latter she still had a little of the reserve that usually accompanies young wedlock; but the tones of her voice were kinder even than common; the glance of her eye was tender, and she seldom looked at him without the glow that tinged her cheeks betraying the existence of feelings that habit and time had not yet soothed into absolute tranquillity. With Pathfinder, all was earnest, sincere, even anxious; but the tones never trembled, the eye never fell; and if the cheek flushed, it was with the emotions that are connected with concern.

At length the moment came when Pathfinder must go his way. Chingachgook had already abandoned the canoes, and was posted on the margin of the woods, where a path led into the forest. Here he calmly waited to be joined by his friend. As soon as the latter was aware of this fact, he rose in a solemn manner and took his leave.

"I've sometimes thought that my own fate has been a little hard," he said; "but that of this woman, Mabel, has shamed me into reason."

"June remains, and lives with me," eagerly interrupted our heroine.

"So I comprehend it. If anybody can bring her back from her grief, and make her wish to live, you can do it, Mabel; though I've misgivings about even your success. The poor creatur' is without a tribe, as well as without a husband, and it's not easy to reconcile the feelings to both losses. Ah's me! — what have I to do with other people's miseries and marriages, as if I hadn't affliction enough of my own? Don't speak to me, Mabel — don't speak to me, Jasper — let me go my way in peace, and like a man. I've seen your happiness, and that is a great deal, and I shall be able to bear my own sorrow all the better for it. No — I'll never kiss you ag'in, Mabel, I'll never kiss you ag'in. Here's my hand, Jasper — squeeze it, boy, squeeze it; no fear of its giving way, for it's the hand of a man; — and now, Mabel, do you take it — nay, you must not do this," — preventing Mabel from kissing it and bathing it in her tears — "you must not do this —"

"Pathfinder," asked Mabel, "when shall we see you again?"

"I've thought of that, too; yes, I've thought of that, I have. If the time should ever come when I can look upon you altogether as a sister, Mabel, or a child — it might be better to say a child, since you're young enough to be my daughter — depend on it I'll come back; for it would lighten my very heart to witness your gladness. But if I cannot — farewell — farewell — the Sergeant was wrong — yes, the Sergeant was wrong!"

This was the last the Pathfinder ever uttered to the ears of Jasper Western and Mabel Dunham. He turned away, as if the words choked him, and was quickly at the side of his friend. As soon as the latter saw him approach, he shouldered his own burthen, and glided in among the trees, without waiting to be spoken to. Mabel, her husband, and June all watched the form of the Pathfinder, in the hope of receiving a parting gesture, or a stolen glance of the eye; but he did not look back. Once or twice they thought they saw his head shake, as one trembles in bitterness of spirit; and a toss of the hand was given, as if he knew that he was watched; but a tread, whose vigor no sorrow could enfeeble, soon bore him out of view, and was lost in the depths of the forest.

Neither Jasper nor his wife ever beheld the Pathfinder again. They remained for another year on the banks of Ontario; and then the pressing solicitations of Cap induced them to join him in New York, where Jasper eventually became a successful and respected merchant. Thrice Mabel received valuable presents of furs at intervals of years; and her feelings told her whence they came, though no name accompanied the gift. Later in life still, when the mother of several youths, she had occasion to visit the interior; and found herself on the banks of the Mohawk, accompanied by her sons, the eldest of whom was capable of being her protector. On that occasion she observed a man in a singular guise, watching her in the distance, with an intentness that induced her to inquire into his pursuits and character. She was told he was the most

renowned hunter of that portion of the State — it was after the Revolution — a being of great purity of character and of as marked peculiarities; and that he was known in that region of country by the name of the Leatherstocking. Further than this Mrs. Western could not ascertain; though the distant glimpse and singular deportment of this unknown hunter gave her a sleepless night, and cast a shade of melancholy over her still lovely face, that lasted many a day.

As for June, the double loss of husband and tribe produced the effect that Pathfinder had foreseen. She died in the cottage of Mabel, on the shores of the lake; and Jasper conveyed her body to the island, where he interred it by the side of that of Arrowhead.

Lundie lived to marry his ancient love, and retired a war-worn and battered veteran; but his name has been rendered illustrious in our own time by the deeds of a younger brother, who succeeded to his territorial title, which, however, was shortly after merged in one earned by his valor on the ocean.



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Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 11:53

# BOOK IV

## THE PIONEERS - THE SOURCES OF SUSQUEHANNA

### CHAPTER I.

"See, winter comes, to rule the varied years,  
Sullen and sad, with all his rising train;  
Vapors, and clouds, and storms."—Thomson.

Near the centre of the State of New York lies an extensive district of country whose surface is a succession of hills and dales, or, to speak with greater deference to geographical definitions, of mountains and valleys. It is among these hills that the Delaware takes its rise; and flowing from the limpid lakes and thousand springs of this region the numerous sources of the Susquehanna meander through the valleys until, uniting their streams, they form one of the proudest rivers of the United States. The mountains are generally arable to the tops, although instances are not wanting where the sides are jugged with rocks that aid greatly in giving to the country that romantic and picturesque character which it so eminently possesses. The vales are narrow, rich, and cultivated, with a stream uniformly winding through each. Beautiful and thriving villages are found interspersed along the margins of the small lakes, or situated at those points of the streams which are favorable for manufacturing; and neat and comfortable farms, with every indication of wealth about them, are scattered profusely through the vales, and even to the mountain tops. Roads diverge in every direction from the even and graceful bottoms of the valleys to the most rugged and intricate passes of the hills. Academies and minor edifices of learning meet the eye of the stranger at every few miles as he winds his way through this uneven territory, and places for the worship of God abound with that frequency which characterize a moral and reflecting people, and with that variety of exterior and canonical government which flows from unfettered liberty of conscience. In short, the whole district is hourly exhibiting how much can be done, in even a rugged country and with a severe climate, under the dominion of mild laws, and where every man feels a direct interest in the prosperity of a commonwealth of which he knows himself to form a part. The expedients of the pioneers who first broke ground in the settlement of this country are succeeded by the permanent improvements of the yeoman who intends to leave his remains to moulder under the sod which he tills, or perhaps of the son, who, born in the land, piously wishes to linger around the grave of his father. Only forty years \* have passed since this territory was a wilderness.

\* Our tale begins in 1793, about seven years after the commencement of one of the earliest of those settlements which have conducted to effect that magical change in the power and condition of the State to which we have alluded.

Very soon after the establishment of the independence of the States by the peace of 1783, the enterprise of their citizens was directed to a development of the natural advantages of their widely extended dominions. Before the war of the Revolution, the inhabited parts of the colony of New York were limited to less than a tenth of its possessions, a narrow belt of country, extending for a short distance on either side of the Hudson, with a similar occupation of fifty miles on the banks of the Mohawk, together with the islands of Nassau and Staten, and a few insulated settlements on chosen land along the margins of streams, composed the country, which was then inhabited by less than two hundred thousand souls. Within the short period we have mentioned, the population has spread itself over five degrees of latitude and seven of longitude, and has swelled to a million and a half of inhabitants, who are maintained in abundance, and can look forward to ages before the evil day must arrive when their possessions shall become unequal to their wants.

It was near the setting of the sun, on a clear, cold day in December, when a sleigh was moving slowly up one of the mountains in the district we have described. The day had been fine for the season, and but two or three large clouds, whose color seemed brightened by the light reflected from the mass of snow that covered the earth, floated in a sky of the purest blue. The road wound along the brow of a precipice, and on one side was upheld by a foundation of logs piled one upon the other, while a narrow excavation in the mountain in the opposite direction had made a passage of sufficient width for the ordinary travelling of that day. But logs, excavation, and every thing that did not reach several feet above the earth lay alike buried beneath the snow. A single track, barely wide enough to receive the sleigh, \* denoted the route of the highway, and this was sunk nearly two feet below the surrounding surface.

\* Sleigh is the word used in every part of the United States to denote a traineau. It is of local use in the west of England, whence it is most probably derived by the Americans. The latter draw a distinction between a sled, or sledge, and a sleigh, the sleigh being shod with metal. Sleighs are also subdivided into two-horse and one-horse sleighs. Of the latter, there are the cutter, with thills so arranged as to permit the horse to travel in the side track; the "pung," or "tow-pung" which is driven with a pole; and the "gumper," a rude construction used for temporary purposes in the new countries. Many of the American sleighs are elegant though the use of this mode of conveyance is much lessened with the melioration of the climate consequent to the clearing of the forests.

In the vale, which lay at a distance of several hundred feet lower, there was what, in the language of the country, was called a clearing, and all the usual improvements of a new settlement; these even extended up the hill to the point where the road turned short and ran across the level land, which lay on the summit of the mountain; but the summit itself remained in the forest. There was glittering in the atmosphere, as if it was filled with innumerable shining particles; and the noble bay horses that drew the sleigh were covered, in many parts with a coat of hoar-frost. The vapor from their nostrils was seen to issue like smoke; and every object in the view, as well as every arrangement of the travellers, denoted the depth of a winter in the mountains. The harness, which was of a deep, dull black, differing from the glossy varnishing of the present day, was ornamented with enormous plates and buckles of brass, that shone like gold in those transient beams of the sun which found their way obliquely through the tops of the trees. Huge saddles, studded with nails and fitted with cloth that served as blankets to the shoulders of the cattle, supported four high, square-topped turrets, through which the stout reins led from the mouths of the horses to the hands of the driver, who was a negro, of apparently twenty years of age. His face, which nature had colored with a glistening black, was now mottled with the cold, and his large shining eyes filled

with tears; a tribute to its power that the keen frosts of those regions always extracted from one of his African origin. Still, there was a smiling expression of good-humor in his happy countenance, that was created by the thoughts of home and a Christmas fireside, with its Christmas frolics. The sleigh was one of those large, comfortable, old-fashioned conveyances, which would admit a whole family within its bosom, but which now contained only two passengers besides the driver. The color of its outside was a modest green, and that of its inside a fiery red. The latter was intended to convey the idea of heat in that cold climate. Large buffalo-skins trimmed around the edges with red cloth cut into festoons, covered the back of the sleigh, and were spread over its bottom and drawn up around the feet of the travellers—one of whom was a man of middle age and the other a female just entering upon womanhood. The former was of a large stature; but the precautions he had taken to guard against the cold left but little of his person exposed to view. A great-coat, that was abundantly ornamented by a profusion of furs, enveloped the whole of his figure excepting the head, which was covered with a cap of mar ten-skins lined with morocco, the sides of which were made to fall, if necessary, and were now drawn close over the ears and fastened beneath his chin with a black rib bon. The top of the cap was surmounted with the tail of the animal whose skin had furnished the rest of the materials, which fell back, not ungracefully, a few inches behind the head. From beneath this mask were to be seen part of a fine, manly face, and particularly a pair of expressive large blue eyes, that promised extraordinary intellect, covert humor, and great benevolence. The form of his companion was literally hid beneath the garments she wore. There were furs and silks peeping from under a large camelot cloak with a thick flannel lining, that by its cut and size was evidently intended for a masculine wearer. A huge hood of black silk, that was quilted with down, concealed the whole of her head, except at a small opening in front for breath, through which occasionally sparkled a pair of animated jet-black eyes.

Both the father and daughter (for such was the connection between the two travellers) were too much occupied with their reflections to break a stillness that derived little or no interruption from the easy gliding of the sleigh by the sound of their voices. The former was thinking of the wife that had held this their only child to her bosom, when, four years before, she had reluctantly consented to relinquish the society of her daughter in order that the latter might enjoy the advantages of an education which the city of New York could only offer at that period. A few months afterward death had deprived him of the remaining companion of his solitude; but still he had enough real regard for his child not to bring her into the comparative wilderness in which he dwelt, until the full period had expired to which he had limited her juvenile labors. The reflections of the daughter were less melancholy, and mingled with a pleased astonishment at the novel scenery she met at every turn in the road.

The mountain on which they were journeying was covered with pines that rose without a branch some seventy or eighty feet, and which frequently doubled that height by the addition of the tops. Through the innumerable vistas that opened beneath the lofty trees, the eye could penetrate until it was met by a distant inequality in the ground, or was stopped by a view of the summit of the mountain which lay on the opposite side of the valley to which they were hastening. The dark trunks of the trees rose from the pure white of the snow in regularly formed shafts, until, at a great height, their branches shot forth horizontal limbs, that were covered with the meagre foliage of an evergreen, affording a melancholy contrast to the torpor of nature below. To the travellers there seemed to be no wind; but these pines waved majestically at their topmost boughs, sending forth a dull, plaintive sound that was quite in consonance with the rest of the melancholy scene.

The sleigh had glided for some distance along the even surface, and the gaze of the female was bent in inquisitive and, perhaps, timid glances into the recesses of the forest, when a loud and continued howling was heard, pealing under the long arches of the woods like the cry of a numerous pack of hounds. The instant the sounds reached the ear of the gentleman he cried aloud to the black:

“Hol up, Aggy; there is old Hector; I should know his bay among ten thousand! The Leather-Stocking has put his hounds into the hills this clear day, and they have started their game. There is a deer-track a few rods ahead; and now, Bess, if thou canst muster courage enough to stand fire, I will give thee a saddle for thy Christmas dinner.”

The black drew up, with a cheerful grin upon his chilled features, and began thrashing his arms together in order to restore the circulation of his fingers, while the speaker stood erect and, throwing aside his outer covering, stepped from the sleigh upon a bank of snow which sustained his weight without yielding.

In a few moments the speaker succeeded in extricating a double-barrelled fowling-piece from among a multitude of trunks and bandboxes. After throwing aside the thick mittens which had encased his hands, there now appeared a pair of leather gloves tipped with fur; he examined his priming, and was about to move forward, when the light bounding noise of an animal plunging through the woods was heard, and a fine buck darted into the path a short distance ahead of him. The appearance of the animal was sudden, and his flight inconceivably rapid; but the traveller appeared to be too keen a sportsman to be disconcerted by either. As it came first into view he raised the fowling-piece to his shoulder and, with a practised eye and steady hand, drew a trigger. The deer dashed forward undaunted, and apparently unhurt. Without lowering his piece, the traveller turned its muzzle toward his victim, and fired again. Neither discharge, however, seemed to have taken effect.

The whole scene had passed with a rapidity that confused the female, who was unconsciously rejoicing in the escape of the buck, as he rather darted like a meteor than ran across the road, when a sharp, quick sound struck her ear, quite different from the full, round reports of her father's gun, but still sufficiently distinct to be known as the concussion produced by firearms. At the same instant that she heard this unexpected report, the buck sprang from the snow to a great height in the air, and directly a second discharge, similar in sound to the first, followed, when the animal came to the earth, falling head long and rolling over on the crust with its own velocity. A loud shout was given by the unseen marksman, and a couple of men instantly appeared from behind the trunks of two of the pines, where they had evidently placed themselves in expectation of the passage of the deer.

“Ha! Natty, had I known you were in ambush, I should not have fired,” cried the traveller, moving toward the spot where the deer lay—near to which he was followed by the delighted black, with his sleigh; “but the sound of old Hector was too exhilarating to be quiet; though I hardly think I struck him, either.”

“No—no—Judge,” returned the hunter, with an inward chuckle, and with that look of exultation that indicates a consciousness of superior skill, “you burnt your powder only to warm your nose this cold evening. Did ye think to stop a full-grown buck, with Hector

and the slut open upon him within sound, with that pop-gun in your hand! There's plenty of pheasants among the swamps; and the snow-birds are flying round your own door, where you may feed them with crumbs, and shoot them at pleasure, any day; but if you're for a buck, or a little bear's meat, Judge, you'll have to take the long rifle, with a greased wadding, or you'll waste more powder than you'll fill stomachs, I'm thinking."

As the speaker concluded he drew his bare hand across the bottom of his nose, and again opened his enormous mouth with a kind of inward laugh.

"The gun scatters well, Natty, And it has killed a deer before now," said the traveller, smiling good-humoredly. "One barrel was charged with buckshot, but the other was loaded for birds only. Here are two hurts; one through the neck, and the other directly through the heart. It is by no means certain, Natty, but I gave him one of the two.

"Let who will kill him," said the hunter, rather surily.

"I suppose the creature is to be eaten." So saying, he drew a large knife from a leathern sheath, which was stuck through his girdle, or sash, and cut the throat of the animal, "If there are two balls through the deer, I would ask if there weren't two rifles fired—besides, who ever saw such a ragged hole from a smooth-bore as this through the neck? And you will own yourself, Judge, that the buck fell at the last shot, which was sent from a truer and a younger hand than your'n or mine either; but, for my part, although I am a poor man I can live without the venison, but I don't love to give up my lawful dues in a free country. Though, for the matter of that, might often makes right here, as well as in the old country, for what I can see."

An air of sullen dissatisfaction pervaded the manner of the hunter during the whole of his speech; yet he thought it prudent to utter the close of the sentence in such an undertone as to leave nothing audible but the grumbling sounds of his voice.

"Nay, Natty," rejoined the traveller, with undisturbed good-humor, "it is for the honor that I contend. A few dollars will pay for the venison; but what will requite me for the lost honor of a buck's tail in my cap? Think, Natty, how I should triumph over that quizzing dog, Dick Jones, who has failed seven times already this season, and has only brought in one woodchuck and a few gray squirrels."

"Ah! The game is becoming hard to find, indeed, Judge, with your clearings and betterments," said the old hunter, with a kind of compelled resignation. "The time has been when I have shot thirteen deer without counting the fa'ns standing in the door of my own hut; and for bear's meat, if one wanted a ham or so, he had only to watch a-nights, and he could shoot one by moonlight, through the cracks of the logs, no fear of his oversleeping himself neither, for the howling of the wolves was sartin to keep his eyes open. There's old Hector"—patting with affection a tall hound of black and yellow spots, with white belly and legs, that just then came in on the scent, accompanied by the slut he had mentioned; "see where the wolves bit his throat, the night I druv them from the venison that was smoking on the chimney top—that dog is more to be trusted than many a Christian man; for he never forgets a friend, and loves the hand that gives him bread."

There was a peculiarity in the manner of the hunter that attracted the notice of the young female, who had been a close and interested observer of his appearance and equipments, from the moment he came into view. He was tall, and so meagre as to make him seem above even the six feet that he actually stood in his stockings. On his head, which was thinly covered with lank, sandy hair, he wore a cap made of fox-skin, resembling in shape the one we have already described, although much inferior in finish and ornaments. His face was skinny and thin al most to emaciation; but yet it bore no signs of disease—on the contrary, it had every indication of the most robust and enduring health. The cold and exposure had, together, given it a color of uniform red. His gray eyes were glancing under a pair of shaggy brows, that over hung them in long hairs of gray mingled with their natural hue; his scraggy neck was bare, and burnt to the same tint with his face; though a small part of a shirt-collar, made of the country check, was to be seen above the overdress he wore. A kind of coat, made of dressed deer-skin, with the hair on, was belted close to his lank body by a girdle of colored worsted. On his feet were deer-skin moccasins, ornamented with porcupines' quills, after the manner of the Indians, and his limbs were guarded with long leggings of the same material as the moccasins, which, gartering over the knees of his tarnished buckskin breeches, had obtained for him among the settlers the nickname of Leather-Stocking. Over his left shoulder was slung a belt of deer-skin, from which depended an enormous ox-horn, so thinly scraped as to discover the powder it contained. The larger end was fitted ingeniously and securely with a wooden bottom, and the other was stopped tight by a little plug. A leathern pouch hung before him, from which, as he concluded his last speech, he took a small measure, and, filling it accurately with powder, he commenced reloading the rifle, which as its butt rested on the snow before him reached nearly to the top of his fox-skin cap.

The traveller had been closely examining the wounds during these movements, and now, without heeding the ill-humor of the hunter's manner, he exclaimed:

"I would fain establish a right, Natty, to the honor of this death; and surely if the hit in the neck be mine it is enough; for the shot in the heart was unnecessary—what we call an act of supererogation, Leather-Stocking."

"You may call it by what larned name you please, Judge," said the hunter, throwing his rifle across his left arm, and knocking up a brass lid in the breech, from which he took a small piece of greased leather and, wrapping a bail in it, forced them down by main strength on the powder, where he continued to pound them while speaking. "It's far easier to call names than to shoot a buck on the spring; but the creatur came by his end from a younger hand than either your'n or mine, as I said before."

"What say you, my friend," cried the traveller, turning pleasantly to Natty's companion; "shall we toss up this dollar for the honor, and you keep the silver if you lose; what say you, friend?"

"That I killed the deer," answered the young man, with a little haughtiness, as he leaned on another long rifle similar to that of Natty.

"Here are two to one, indeed," replied the Judge with a smile; "I am outvoted—overruled, as we say on the bench. There is Aggy, he can't vote, being a slave; and Bess is a minor—so I must even make the best of it. But you'll send me the venison; and the deuce is in it, but I make a good story about its death."

"The meat is none of mine to sell," said Leather-Stocking, adopting a little of his companion's hauteur; "for my part, I have known animals travel days with shots in the neck, and I'm none of them who'll rob a man of his rightful dues."

"You are tenacious of your rights, this cold evening, Natty," returned the Judge with unconquerable good-nature; "but what say you, young man; will three dollars pay you for the buck?"

"First let us determine the question of right to the satisfaction of us both," said the youth firmly but respect fully, and with a pronunciation and language vastly superior to his appearance: "with how many shot did you load your gun?"

"With five, sir," said the Judge, a little struck with the other's manner; "are they not enough to slay a buck like this?"

"One would do it; but," moving to the tree from behind which he had appeared, "you know, sir, you fired in this direction—here are four of the bullets in the tree."

The Judge examined the fresh marks in the bark of the pine, and, shaking his head, said with a laugh:

"You are making out the case against yourself, my young advocate; where is the fifth?"

"Here," said the youth, throwing aside the rough over coat that he wore, and exhibiting a hole in his under-garment, through which large drops of blood were oozing.

"Good God!" exclaimed the Judge, with horror; "have I been trifling here about an empty distinction, and a fellow-creature suffering from my hands without a murmur? But hasten—quick—get into my sleigh—it is but a mile to the village, where surgical aid can be obtained—all shall be done at my expense, and thou shalt live with me until thy wound is healed, ay, and forever afterward."

"I thank you for your good intention, but I must decline your offer. I have a friend who would be uneasy were he to hear that I am hurt and away from him. The injury is but slight, and the bullet has missed the bones; but I believe, sir, you will now admit me title to the venison."

"Admit it!" repeated the agitated Judge; "I here give thee a right to shoot deer, or bears, or anything thou pleasest in my woods, forever. Leather-Stocking is the only other man that I have granted the same privilege to; and the time is coming when it will be of value. But I buy your deer—here, this bill will pay thee, both for thy shot and my own."

The old hunter gathered his tall person up into an air of pride during this dialogue, but he waited until the other had done speaking.

"There's them living who say that Nathaniel Bumpo's right to shoot on these hills is of older date than Marmaduke Temple's right to forbid him," he said. "But if there's a law about it at all, though who ever heard of a law that a man shouldn't kill deer where he pleased!—but if there is a law at all, it should be to keep people from the use of smooth-bores. A body never knows where his lead will fly, when he pulls the trigger of one of them uncertain firearms."

Without attending to the soliloquy of Natty, the youth bowed his head silently to the offer of the bank-note, and replied:

"Excuse me: I have need of the venison."

"But this will buy you many deer," said the Judge; "take it, I entreat you;" and, lowering his voice to a whisper, he added, "It is for a hundred dollars."

For an instant only the youth seemed to hesitate, and then, blushing even through the high color that the cold had given to his cheeks, as if with inward shame at his own weakness, he again declined the offer.

During this scene the female arose, and regardless of the cold air, she threw back the hood which concealed her features, and now spoke, with great earnestness.

"Surely, surely—young man—sir—you would not pain my father so much as to have him think that he leaves a fellow-creature in this wilderness whom his own hand has injured. I entreat you will go with us, and receive medical aid."

Whether his wound became more painful, or there was something irresistible in the voice and manner of the fair pleader for her father's feelings, we know not; but the distance of the young man's manner was sensibly softened by this appeal, and he stood in apparent doubt, as if reluctant to comply with and yet unwilling to refuse her request. The Judge, for such being his office must in future be his title, watched with no little interest the display of this singular contention in the feelings of the youth; and, advancing, kindly took his hand, and, as he pulled him gently toward the sleigh, urged him to enter it.

"There is no human aid nearer than Templeton," he said, "and the hut of Natty is full three miles from this—come, come, my young friend, go with us, and let the new doctor look to this shoulder of thine. Here is Natty will take the tidings of thy welfare to thy friend; and shouldst thou require it, thou shalt return home in the morning." The young man succeeded in extricating his hand from the warm grasp of the Judge, but he continued to gaze on the face of the female, who, regardless of the cold, was still standing with her fine features exposed, which expressed feeling that eloquently seconded the request of her father. Leather-Stocking stood, in the mean time, leaning upon his long rifle, with his head turned a little to one side, as if engaged in sagacious musing; when, having apparently satisfied his doubts, by revolving the subject in his mind, he broke silence. "It may be best to go, lad, after all; for, if the shot hangs under the skin, my hand is getting too old to be cutting into human flesh, as I once used to. Though some thirty years ago, in the old war, when I was out under Sir William, I travelled seventy miles alone in the howling wilderness, with a rifle bullet in my thigh, and then cut it out with my own jack-knife. Old Indian John knows the time well. I met him with a party of the Delawares, on the trail of the Iroquois, who had been down and taken five scalps on the Schoharie. But I made a mark on the red-skin that I'll warrant he'll carry to his grave! I took him on the posteerum, saving the lady's presence, as he got up from the ambushment, and rattled three buckshot into his naked hide, so close that you might have laid a broad joe upon them all"—here Natty stretched out his long neck, and straightened his body, as he opened his mouth, which exposed a single tusk of yellow bone, while his eyes, his face, even his whole frame seemed to laugh, although no sound was emitted except a kind of thick hissing, as he inhaled his breath in quavers. "I had lost my bullet-mould in crossing the Oneida outlet, and had to make shift with the buckshot; but the rifle was true, and didn't scatter like your two-legged thing there, Judge, which don't do, I find, to hunt in company with."

Natty's apology to the delicacy of the young lady was unnecessary, for, while he was speaking, she was too much employed in helping her father to remove certain articles of baggage to hear him. Unable to resist the kind urgency of the travellers any longer, the youth, though still with an unaccountable reluctance, suffered himself to be persuaded to enter the sleigh. The black, with the aid of his



master, threw the buck across the baggage and entering the vehicle themselves, the Judge invited the hunter to do so likewise.

"No, no," said the old roan, shaking his head; "I have work to do at home this Christmas eve—drive on with the boy, and let your doctor look to the shoulder; though if he will only cut out the shot, I have yarbs that will heal the wound quicker than all his foreign 'intments." He turned, and was about to move off, when, suddenly recollecting himself, he again faced the party, and added: "If you see anything of Indian John, about the foot of the lake, you had better take him with you, and let him lend the doctor a hand; for, old as he is, he is curious at cuts and bruises, and it's likelier than not he'll be in with brooms to sweep your Christmas ha'arths."

"Stop, stop," cried the youth, catching the arm of the black as he prepared to urge his horses forward; "Natty—you need say nothing of the shot, nor of where I am going—remember, Natty, as you love me."

"Trust old Leather-Stocking," returned the hunter significantly; "he hasn't lived fifty years in the wilderness, and not larnt from the savages how to hold his tongue—trust to me, lad; and remember old Indian John."

"And, Natty," said the youth eagerly, still holding the black by the arm. "I will just get the shot extracted, and bring you up to-night a quarter of the buck for the Christmas dinner."

He was interrupted by the hunter, who held up his finger with an expressive gesture for silence. He then moved softly along the margin of the road, keeping his eyes steadfastly fixed on the branches of a pine. When he had obtained such a position as he wished, he stopped, and, cocking his rifle, threw one leg far behind him, and stretching his left arm to its utmost extent along the barrel of his piece, he began slowly to raise its muzzle in a line with the straight trunk of the tree. The eyes of the group in the sleigh naturally preceded the movement of the rifle, and they soon discovered the object of Natty's aim. On a small dead branch of the pine, which, at the distance of seventy feet from the ground, shot out horizontally, immediately beneath the living members of the tree, sat a bird, that in the vulgar language of the country was indiscriminately called a pheasant or a partridge. In size, it was but little smaller than a common barn-yard fowl. The baying of the dogs, and the conversation that had passed near the root of the tree on which it was perched, had alarmed the bird, which was now drawn up near the body of the pine, with a head and neck so erect as to form nearly a straight line with its legs. As soon as the rifle bore on the victim, Natty drew his trigger, and the partridge fell from its height with a force that buried it in the snow.

"Lie down, you old villain," exclaimed Leather-Stocking, shaking his ramrod at Hector as he bounded toward the foot of the tree, "lie down, I say." The dog obeyed, and Natty proceeded with great rapidity, though with the nicest accuracy, to reload his piece. When this was ended, he took up his game, and, showing it to the party without a head, he cried: "Here is a tidbit for an old man's Christmas—never mind the venison, boy, and remember Indian John; his yarbs are better than all the foreign 'intments. Here, Judge," holding up the bird again, "do you think a smooth-bore would pick game off their roost, and not ruffle a feather?" The old man gave another of his remarkable laughs, which partook so largely of exultation, mirth, and irony, and, shaking his head, he turned, with his rifle at a trail, and moved into the forest with steps that were between a walk and a trot. At each movement he made his body lowered several inches, his knees yielding with an inclination inward; but, as the sleigh turned at a bend in the road, the youth cast his eyes in quest of his old companion, and he saw that he was already nearly concealed by the trunks of the tree; while his dogs were following quietly in his footsteps, occasionally scenting the deer track, that they seemed to know instinctively was now of no further use to them. Another jerk was given to the sleigh, and Leather-Stocking was hid from view.

## CHAPTER II

All places that the eye of heaven visits  
Are to a wise man ports and happy havens:  
Think not the king did banish thee:  
But thou the king.—Richard II

An ancestor of Marmaduke Temple had, about one hundred and twenty years before the commencement of our tale, come to the colony of Pennsylvania, a friend and co-religionist of its great patron. Old Marmaduke, for this formidable prenomem was a kind of appellative to the race, brought with him, to that asylum of the persecuted an abundance of the good things of this life. He became the master of many thousands of acres of uninhabited territory, and the supporter of many a score of dependents. He lived greatly respected for his piety, and not a little distinguished as a sectary; was intrusted by his associates with many important political stations; and died just in time to escape the knowledge of his own poverty. It was his lot to share the fortune of most of those who brought wealth with them into the new settlements of the middle colonies.

The consequence of an emigrant into these provinces was generally to be ascertained by the number of his white servants or dependents, and the nature of the public situations that he held. Taking this rule as a guide, the ancestor of our Judge must have been a man of no little note.

It is, however, a subject of curious inquiry at the present day, to look into the brief records of that early period, and observe how regular, and with few exceptions how inevitable, were the gradations, on the one hand, of the masters to poverty, and on the other, of their servants to wealth. Accustomed to ease, and unequal to the struggles incident to an infant society, the affluent emigrant was barely enabled to maintain his own rank by the weight of his personal superiority and acquirements; but, the moment that his head was laid in the grave, his indolent and comparatively uneducated offspring were compelled to yield precedence to the more active energies of a class whose exertions had been stimulated by necessity. This is a very common course of things, even in the present state of the Union; but it was peculiarly the fortunes of the two extremes of society, in the peaceful and unenterprising colonies of Pennsylvania and New Jersey,

The posterity of Marmaduke did not escape the common lot of those who depend rather on their hereditary possessions than on their own powers; and in the third generation they had descended to a point below which, in this happy country, it is barely possible for honesty, intellect and sobriety to fall. The same pride of family that had, by its self-satisfied indolence, conduced to aid their fail, now became a principle to stimulate them to endeavor to rise again. The feeling, from being morbid, was changed to a healthful and active desire to emulate the character, the condition, and, peradventure, the wealth of their ancestors also. It was the father of our new acquaintance, the Judge, who first began to reascend in the scale of society; and in this undertaking he was not a little assisted by a marriage, which aided in furnishing the means of educating his only son in a rather better manner than the low state of the common schools of Pennsylvania could promise; or than had been the practice in the family for the two or three preceding generations.

At the school where the reviving prosperity of his father was enabled to maintain him, young Marmaduke formed an intimacy with a youth whose years were about equal to his own. This was a fortunate connection for our Judge, and paved the way to most of his future elevation in life.

There was not only great wealth but high court interest among the connections of Edward Effingham. They were one of the few families then resident in the colonies who thought it a degradation to its members to descend to the pursuits of commerce; and who never emerged from the privacy of domestic life unless to preside in the councils of the colony or to bear arms in her defense. The latter had from youth been the only employment of Edward's father. Military rank under the crown of Great Britain was attained with much longer probation, and by much more toilsome services, sixty years ago than at the present time. Years were passed without murmuring, in the sub ordinate grades of the service; and those soldiers who were stationed in the colonies felt, when they obtained the command of a company, that they were entitled to receive the greatest deference from the peaceful occupants of the soil. Any one of our readers who has occasion to cross the Niagara may easily observe not only the self importance, but the real estimation enjoyed by the hum blest representative of the crown, even in that polar region of royal sunshine. Such, and at no very distant period, was the respect paid to the military in these States, where now, happily, no symbol of war is ever seen, unless at the free and fearless voice of their people. When, therefore, the father of Marmaduke's friend, after forty years' service, retired with the rank of major, maintaining in his domestic establishment a comparative splendor, he became a man of the first consideration in his native colony which was that of New York. He had served with fidelity and courage, and having been, according to the custom of the provinces, intrusted with commands much superior to those to which he was entitled by rank, with reputation also. When Major Effingham yielded to the claims of age, he retired with dignity, refusing his half-pay or any other compensation for services that he felt he could no longer perform.

The ministry proffered various civil offices which yielded not only honor but profit; but he declined them all, with the chivalrous independence and loyalty that had marked his character through life. The veteran soon caused this set of patriotic disinterestedness to be followed by another of private munificence, that, however little it accorded with prudence, was in perfect conformity with the simple integrity of his own views.

The friend of Marmaduke was his only child; and to this son, on his marriage with a lady to whom the father was particularly partial, the Major gave a complete conveyance of his whole estate, consisting of money in the funds, a town and country residence, sundry valuable farms in the old parts of the colony, and large tracts of wild land in the new—in this manner throwing himself upon the filial piety of his child for his own future maintenance. Major Effingham, in declining the liberal offers of the British ministry, had subjected himself to the suspicion of having attained his dotage, by all those who throng the avenues to court patronage, even in the remotest

corners of that vast empire; but, when he thus voluntarily stripped himself of his great personal wealth, the remainder of the community seemed instinctively to adopt the conclusion also that he had reached a second childhood. This may explain the fact of his importance rapidly declining; and, if privacy was his object, the veteran had soon a free indulgence of his wishes. Whatever views the world might entertain of this act of the Major, to himself and to his child it seemed no more than a natural gift by a father of those immunities which he could no longer enjoy or improve, to a son, who was formed, both by nature and education, to do both. The younger Effingham did not object to the amount of the donation; for he felt that while his parent reserved a moral control over his actions, he was relieving himself of a fatiguing burden: such, indeed, was the confidence existing between them, that to neither did it seem anything more than removing money from one pocket to another.

One of the first acts of the young man, on coming into possession of his wealth, was to seek his early friend, with a view to offer any assistance that it was now in his power to bestow.

The death of Marmaduke's father, and the consequent division of his small estate, rendered such an offer extremely acceptable to the young Pennsylvanian; he felt his own powers, and saw, not only the excellences, but the foibles in the character of his friend. Effingham was by nature indolent, confiding, and at times impetuous and indiscreet; but Marmaduke was uniformly equable, penetrating, and full of activity and enterprise. To the latter therefore, the assistance, or rather connection that was proffered to him, seemed to produce a mutual advantage. It was cheerfully accepted, and the arrangement of its conditions was easily completed. A mercantile house was established in the metropolis of Pennsylvania, with the avails of Mr. Effingham's personal property; all, or nearly all, of which was put into the possession of Temple, who was the only ostensible proprietor in the concern, while, in secret, the other was entitled to an equal participation in the profits. This connection was thus kept private for two reasons, one of which, in the freedom of their inter course, was frankly avowed to Marmaduke, while the other continued profoundly hid in the bosom of his friend, The last was nothing more than pride. To the descendant of a line of soldiers, commerce, even in that indirect manner, seemed a degrading pursuit; but an insuperable obstacle to the disclosure existed in the prejudices of his father.

We have already said that Major Effingham had served as a soldier with reputation. On one occasion, while in command on the western frontier of Pennsylvania against a league of the French and Indians, not only his glory, but the safety of himself and his troops were jeopardized by the peaceful policy of that colony. To the soldier, this was an unpardonable offence. He was fighting in their defense—he knew that the mild principles of this little nation of practical Christians would be disregarded by their subtle and malignant enemies; and he felt the in jury the more deeply because he saw that the avowed object of the colonists, in withholding their succors, would only have a tendency to expose his command, without preserving the peace. The soldier succeeded, after a desperate conflict, in extricating himself, with a handful of his men, from their murderous enemy; but he never for gave the people who had exposed him to a danger which they left him to combat alone. It was in vain to tell him that they had no agency in his being placed on their frontier at all; it was evidently for their benefit that he had been so placed, and it was their “religious duty,” so the Major always expressed it, “it was their religious duty to have supported him.”

At no time was the old soldier an admirer of the peaceful disciples of Fox. Their disciplined habits, both of mind and body, had endowed them with great physical perfection; and the eye of the veteran was apt to scan the fair proportions and athletic frames of the colonists with a look that seemed to utter volumes of contempt for their moral imbecility. He was also a little addicted to the expression of a belief that, where there was so great an observance of the externals of religion, there could not be much of the substance. It is not our task to explain what is or what ought to be the substance of Christianity, but merely to record in this place the opinions of Major Effingham.

Knowing the sentiments of the father in relation to this people, it was no wonder that the son hesitated to avow his connection with, nay, even his dependence on the integrity of, a Quaker.

It has been said that Marmaduke deduced his origin from the contemporaries and friends of Penn. His father had married without the pale of the church to which he belonged, and had, in this manner, forfeited some of the privileges of his offspring. Still, as young Marmaduke was educated in a colony and society where even the ordinary intercourse between friends was tinged with the aspect of this mild religion, his habits and language were some what marked by its peculiarities. His own marriage at a future day with a lady without not only the pale, but the influence, of this sect of religionists, had a tendency, it is true, to weaken his early impressions; still he retained them in some degree to the hour of his death, and was observed uniformly, when much interested or agitated, to speak in the language of his youth. But this is anticipating our tale.

When Marmaduke first became the partner of young Effingham, he was quite the Quaker in externals; and it was too dangerous an experiment for the son to think of encountering the prejudices of the father on this subject. The connection, therefore, remained a profound secret to all but those who were interested in it.

For a few years Marmaduke directed the commercial operations of his house with a prudence and sagacity that afforded rich returns. He married the lady we have mentioned, who was the mother of Elizabeth, and the visits of his friend were becoming more frequent. There was a speedy prospect of removing the veil from their intercourse, as its advantages became each hour more apparent to Mr. Effingham, when the troubles that preceded the war of the Revolution extended themselves to an alarming degree.

Educated in the most dependent loyalty, Mr. Effingham had, from the commencement of the disputes between the colonists and the crown, warmly maintained what he believed to be the just prerogatives of his prince; while, on the other hand, the clear head and independent mind of Temple had induced him to espouse the cause of the people. Both might have been influenced by early impressions; for, if the son of the loyal and gallant soldier bowed in implicit obedience to the will of his sovereign, the descendant of the persecuted followers of Penn looked back with a little bitterness to the unmerited wrongs that had been heaped upon his ancestors.

This difference in opinion had long been a subject of amicable dispute between them: but, Latterly, the contest was getting to be too important to admit of trivial discussions on the part of Marmaduke, whose acute discernment was already catching faint glimmerings of the important events that were in embryo. The sparks of dissension soon kindled into a blaze; and the colonies, or rather, as they quickly declared themselves, THE STATES, became a scene of strife and bloodshed for years.

A short time before the battle of Lexington, Mr. Effingham, already a widower, transmitted to Marmaduke, for safe-keeping, all his valuable effects and papers; and left the colony without his father. The war had, however, scarcely commenced in earnest, when he reappeared in New York, wearing the Livery of his king; and, in a short time, he took the field at the head of a provincial corps. In the mean time Marmaduke had completely committed himself in the cause, as it was then called, of the rebel lion. Of course, all intercourse between the friends ceased—on the part of Colonel Effingham it was unsought, and on that of Marmaduke there was a cautious reserve. It soon became necessary for the latter to abandon the capital of Philadelphia; but he had taken the precaution to remove the whole of his effects beyond the reach of the royal forces, including the papers of his friend also. There he continued serving his country during the struggle, in various civil capacities, and always with dignity and usefulness. While, however, he discharged his functions with credit and fidelity, Marmaduke never seemed to lose sight of his own interests; for, when the estates of the adherents of the crown fell under the hammer, by the acts of confiscation, he appeared in New York, and became the purchaser of extensive possessions at comparatively low prices.

It is true that Marmaduke, by thus purchasing estates that had been wrested by violence from others, rendered himself obnoxious to the censures of that Sect which, at the same time that it discards its children from a full participation in the family union, seems ever unwilling to abandon them entirely to the world. But either his success, or the frequency of the transgression in others, soon wiped off this slight stain from his character; and, although there were a few who, dissatisfied with their own fortunes, or conscious of their own demerits, would make dark hints concerning the sudden prosperity of the unportioned Quaker, yet his services, and possibly his wealth, soon drove the recollection of these vague conjectures from men's minds. When the war ended, and the independence of the States was acknowledged, Mr. Temple turned his attention from the pursuit of commerce, which was then fluctuating and uncertain, to the settlement of those tracts of land which he had purchased. Aided by a good deal of money, and directed by the suggestions of a strong and practical reason, his enterprise thrived to a degree that the climate and rugged face of the country which he selected would seem to forbid. His property increased in a tenfold ratio, and he was already ranked among the most wealthy and important of his countrymen. To inherit this wealth he had but one child—the daughter whom we have introduced to the reader, and whom he was now conveying from school to preside over a household that had too long wanted a mistress.

When the district in which his estates lay had become sufficiently populous to be set off as a county, Mr. Temple had, according to the custom of the new settlements, been selected to fill its highest judicial station. This might make a Templar smile; but in addition to the apology of necessity, there is ever a dignity in talents and experience that is commonly sufficient, in any station, for the protection of its possessor; and Marmaduke, more fortunate in his native clearness of mind than the judge of King Charles, not only decided right, but was generally able to give a very good reason for it. At all events, such was the universal practice of the country and the times; and Judge Temple, so far from ranking among the lowest of his judicial contemporaries in the courts of the new counties, felt himself, and was unanimously acknowledged to be, among the first.

We shall here close this brief explanation of the history and character of some of our personages leaving them in future to speak and act for themselves.

## CHAPTER III

"All that thou see'st is Natures handiwork;  
Those rocks that upward throw their mossy brawl  
Like castled pinnacles of elder times;  
These venerable stems, that slowly rock  
Their towering branches in the wintry gale;  
That field of frost, which glitters in the sun,  
Mocking the whiteness of a marble breast!  
Yet man can mar such works with his rude taste,  
Like some sad spoiler of a virgin's fame."  
—Duo.

Some little while elapsed ere Marmaduke Temple was sufficiently recovered from his agitation to scan the person of his new companion. He now observed that he was a youth of some two or three and twenty years of age, and rather above the middle height. Further observation was prevented by the rough overcoat which was belted close to his form by a worsted sash, much like the one worn by the old hunter. The eyes of the Judge, after resting a moment on the figure of the stranger, were raised to a scrutiny of his countenance. There had been a look of care visible in the features of the youth, when he first entered the sleigh, that had not only attracted the notice of Elizabeth, but which she had been much puzzled to interpret. His anxiety seemed the strongest when he was enjoining his old companion to secrecy; and even when he had decided, and was rather passively suffering himself to be conveyed to the village, the expression of his eyes by no means indicated any great degree of self-satisfaction at the step. But the lines of an uncommonly prepossessing countenance were gradually becoming composed; and he now sat silent, and apparently musing. The Judge gazed at him for some time with earnestness, and then smiling, as if at his own forgetfulness, he said:

"I believe, my young friend, that terror has driven you from my recollection; your face is very familiar, and yet, for the honor of a score of bucks' tails in my cap, I could not tell your name."

"I came into the country but three weeks since," returned the youth coldly, "and I understand you have been absent twice that time."

"It will be five to-morrow. Yet your face is one that I have seen; though it would not be strange, such has been my affright, should I see thee in thy winding-sheet walking by my bedside to-night. What say'st thou, Bess? Am I compos mentis or not? Fit to charge a grand jury, or, what is just now of more pressing necessity, able to do the honors of Christmas eve in the hall of Templeton?"

"More able to do either, my dear father," said a playful voice from under the ample inclosures of the hood, "than to kill deer with a smooth-bore." A short pause followed, and the same voice, but in a different accent, continued. "We shall have good reasons for our thanksgiving to night, on more accounts than one."

The horses soon reached a point where they seemed to know by instinct that the journey was nearly ended, and, bearing on the bits as they tossed their heads, they rapidly drew the sleigh over the level land which lay on the top of the mountain, and soon came to the point where the road descended suddenly, but circuitously, into the valley.

The Judge was roused from his reflections, when he saw the four columns of smoke which floated above his own chimneys. As house, village, and valley burst on his sight, he exclaimed cheerfully to his daughter:

"See, Bess, there is thy resting-place for life! And thine too, young man, if thou wilt consent to dwell with us."

The eyes of his auditors involuntarily met; and, if the color that gathered over the face of Elizabeth was contradicted by the cold expression of her eye, the ambiguous smile that again played about the lips of the stranger seemed equally to deny the probability of his consenting to form one of this family group. The scene was one, however, which might easily warm a heart less given to philanthropy than that of Marmaduke Temple.

The side of the mountain on which our travellers were journeying, though not absolutely perpendicular, was so steep as to render great care necessary in descending the rude and narrow path which, in that early day, wound along the precipices. The negro reined in his impatient steeds, and time was given Elizabeth to dwell on a scene which was so rapidly altering under the hands of man, that it only resembled in its outlines the picture she had so often studied with delight in childhood. Immediately beneath them lay a seeming plain, glittering without in equality, and buried in mountains. The latter were precipitous, especially on the side of the plain, and chiefly in forest. Here and there the hills fell away in long, low points, and broke the sameness of the outline, or setting to the long and wide field of snow, which, without house, tree, fence, or any other fixture, resembled so much spot less cloud settled to the earth. A few dark and moving spots were, however, visible on the even surface, which the eye of Elizabeth knew to be so many sleighs going their several ways to or from the village. On the western border of the plain, the mountains, though equally high, were less precipitous, and as they receded opened into irregular valleys and glens, or were formed into terraces and hollows that admitted of cultivation. Although the evergreens still held dominion over many of the hills that rose on this side of the valley, yet the undulating outlines of the distant mountains, covered with forests of beech and maple, gave a relief to the eye, and the promise of a kinder soil. Occasionally spots of white were discoverable amidst the forests of the opposite hills, which announced, by the smoke that curled over the tops of the trees, the habitations of man and the commencement of agriculture. These spots were sometimes, by the aid of united labor, enlarged into what were called settlements, but more frequently were small and insulated; though so rapid were the changes, and so persevering the labors of those who had cast their fortunes on the success of the enterprise, that it was not difficult for the imagination of Elizabeth to conceive they were enlarging under her eye while she was gazing, in mute wonder, at the alterations that a few short years had made in the aspect of the country. The points on the western side of this remarkable plain, on which no plant had taken root, were both larger and more numerous than those on its eastern, and one in particular thrust itself forward in such a manner as to form beautifully curved bays of snow on either side. On its extreme end an oak stretched forward, as if to overshadow with its branches a

spot which its roots were forbidden to enter. It had released itself from the thralldom that a growth of centuries had imposed on the branches of the surrounding forest trees, and threw its gnarled and fantastic arms abroad, in the wildness of liberty. A dark spot of a few acres in extent at the southern extremity of this beautiful flat, and immediately under the feet of our travellers, alone showed by its rippling surface, and the vapors which exhaled from it, that what at first might seem a plain was one of the mountain lakes, locked in the frosts of winter. A narrow current rushed impetuously from its bosom at the open place we have mentioned, and was to be traced for miles, as it wound its way toward the south through the real valley, by its borders of hemlock and pine, and by the vapor which arose from its warmer surface into the chill atmosphere of the hills. The banks of this lovely basin, at its outlet, or southern end, were steep, but not high; and in that direction the land continued, far as the eye could reach, a narrow but graceful valley, along which the settlers had scattered their humble habitations, with a profusion that bespoke the quality of the soil and the comparative facilities of intercourse. Immediately on the bank of the lake and at its foot, stood the village of Templeton. It consisted of some fifty buildings, including those of every description, chiefly built of wood, and which, in their architecture, bore no great marks of taste, but which also, by the unfinished appearance of most of the dwellings, indicated the hasty manner of their construction. To the eye, they presented a variety of colors. A few were white in both front and rear, but more bore that expensive color on their fronts only, while their economical but ambitious owners had covered the remaining sides of the edifices with a dingy red. One or two were slowly assuming the russet of age; while the uncovered beams that were to be seen through the broken windows of their second stories showed that either the taste or the vanity of their proprietors had led them to undertake a task which they were unable to accomplish. The whole were grouped in a manner that aped the streets of a city, and were evidently so arranged by the directions of one who looked to the wants of posterity rather than to the convenience of the present incumbents. Some three or four of the better sort of buildings, in addition to the uniformity of their color, were fitted with green blinds, which, at that season at least, were rather strangely contrasted to the chill aspect of the lake, the mountains, the forests, and the wide fields of snow. Before the doors of these pretending dwellings were placed a few saplings, either without branches or possessing only the feeble shoots of one or two summers' growth, that looked not unlike tall grenadiers on post near the threshold of princes. In truth, the occupants of these favored habitations were the nobles of Templeton, as Marmaduke was its king. They were the dwellings of two young men who were cunning in the law; an equal number of that class who chattered to the wants of the community under the title of storekeepers; and a disciple of Aesculapius, who, for a novelty, brought more subjects into the world than he sent out of it. In the midst of this incongruous group of dwellings rose the mansion of the Judge, towering above all its neighbors. It stood in the centre of an inclosure of several acres, which was covered with fruit-trees. Some of the latter had been left by the Indians, and began already to assume the moss and inclination of age, therein forming a very marked contrast to the infant plantations that peered over most of the picketed fences of the village. In addition to this show of cultivation were two rows of young Lombardy poplars, a tree but lately introduced into America, formally lining either side of a pathway which led from a gate that opened on the principal street to the front door of the building. The house itself had been built entirely under the superintendence of a certain Mr. Richard Jones, whom we have already mentioned, and who, from his cleverness in small matters, and an entire willingness to exert his talents, added to the circumstance of their being sisters' children, ordinarily superintended all the minor concerns of Marmaduke Temple. Richard was fond of saying that this child of invention consisted of nothing more nor less than what should form the groundwork of every clergyman's discourse, viz., a firstly and a lastly. He had commenced his labors, in the first year of their residence, by erecting a tall, gaunt edifice of wood, with its gable toward the highway. In this shelter for it was little more, the family resided three years. By the end of that period, Richard had completed his design. He had availed himself, in this heavy undertaking, of the experience of a certain wandering eastern mechanic, who, by exhibiting a few soiled plates of English architecture, and talking learnedly of friezes, entablatures, and particularly of the composite order, had obtained a very undue influence over Richard's taste in everything that pertained to that branch of the fine arts. Not that Mr. Jones did not affect to consider Hiram Doolittle a perfect empiric in his profession, being in the constant habit of listening to his treatises on architecture with a kind of indulgent smile; yet, either from an inability to oppose them by anything plausible from his own stores of learning or from secret admiration, Richard generally submitted to the arguments of his co-adjutor. Together, they had not only erected a dwelling for Marmaduke, but they had given a fashion to the architecture of the whole county. The composite order, Mr. Doolittle would contend, was an order composed of many others, and was intended to be the most useful of all, for it admitted into its construction such alterations as convenience or circumstances might require. To this proposition Richard usually assented; and when rival geniuses who monopolize not only all the reputation but most of the money of a neighborhood, are of a mind, it is not uncommon to see them lead the fashion, even in graver matters. In the present instance, as we have already hinted, the castle, as Judge Templeton's dwelling was termed in common parlance, came to be the model, in some one or other of its numerous excellences, for every aspiring edifice within twenty miles of it.

The house itself, or the "lastly," was of stone: large, square, and far from uncomfortable. These were four requisites, on which Marmaduke had insisted with a little more than his ordinary pertinacity. But everything else was peaceably assigned to Richard and his associate. These worthies found the material a little too solid for the tools of their workmen, which, in General, were employed on a substance no harder than the white pine of the adjacent mountains, a wood so proverbially soft that it is commonly chosen by the hunters for pillows. But for this awkward dilemma, it is probable that the ambitious tastes of our two architects would have left us much more to do in the way of description. Driven from the faces of the house by the obduracy of the material, they took refuge in the porch and on the roof. The former, it was decided, should be severely classical, and the latter a rare specimen of the merits of the Composite order.

A roof, Richard contended, was a part of the edifice that the ancients always endeavored to conceal, it being an excrescence in architecture that was only to be tolerated on account of its usefulness. Besides, as he wittily added, a chief merit in a dwelling was to present a front on whichever side it might happen to be seen; for, as it was exposed to all eyes in all weathers, there should be no weak flank for envy or unneighborly criticism to assail. It was therefore decided that the roof should be flat, and with four faces. To this arrangement, Marmaduke objected the heavy snows that lay for months, frequently covering the earth to a depth of three or four feet. Happily the facilities of the composite order presented themselves to effect a compromise, and the rafters were lengthened, so as to

give a descent that should carry off the frozen element. But, unluckily, some mistake was made in the admeasurement of these material parts of the fabric; and, as one of the greatest recommendations of Hiram was his ability to work by the "square rule," no opportunity was found of discovering the effect until the massive timbers were raised on the four walls of the building. Then, indeed, it was soon seen that, in defiance of all rule, the roof was by far the most conspicuous part of the whole edifice. Richard and his associate consoled themselves with the relief that the covering would aid in concealing this unnatural elevation; but every shingle that was laid only multiplied objects to look at. Richard essayed to remedy the evil with paint, and four different colors were laid on by his own hands. The first was a sky-blue, in the vain expectation that the eye might be cheated into the belief it was the heavens themselves that hung so imposingly over Marmaduke's dwelling; the second was what he called a "cloud-color," being nothing more nor less than an imitation of smoke; the third was what Richard termed an invisible green, an experiment that did not succeed against a background of sky. Abandoning the attempt to conceal, our architects drew upon their invention for means to ornament the offensive shingles.

After much deliberation and two or three essays by moonlight, Richard ended the affair by boldly covering the whole beneath a color that he christened "sunshine," a cheap way, as he assured his cousin the Judge, of always keeping fair weather over his head. The platform, as well as the caves of the house, were surmounted by gaudily painted railings, and the genius of Hiram was exerted in the fabrication of divers urns and mouldings, that were scattered profusely around this part of their labors. Richard had originally a cunning expedient, by which the chimneys were intended to be so low, and so situated, as to resemble ornaments on the balustrades; but comfort required that the chimneys should rise with the roof, in order that the smoke might be carried off, and they thus became four extremely conspicuous objects in the view.

As this roof was much the most important architectural undertaking in which Mr. Jones was ever engaged, his failure produced a correspondent degree of mortification. At first, he whispered among his acquaintances that it proceeded from ignorance of the square rule on the part of Hiram; but, as his eye became gradually accustomed to the object, he grew better satisfied with his labors, and instead of apologizing for the defects, he commenced praising the beauties of the mansion-house; he soon found hearers, and, as wealth and comfort are at all times attractive, it was, as has been said, made a model for imitation on a small scale. In less than two years from its erection, he had the pleasure of standing on the elevated platform, and of looking down on three humble imitators of its beauty. Thus it is ever with fashion, which even renders the faults of the great subjects of admiration.

Marmaduke bore this deformity in his dwelling with great good-nature, and soon contrived, by his own improvements, to give an air of respectability and comfort to his place of residence. Still, there was much of incongruity, even immediately about the mansion-house. Although poplars had been brought from Europe to ornament the grounds, and willows and other trees were gradually springing up nigh the dwelling, yet many a pile of snow betrayed the presence of the stump of a pine; and even, in one or two instances, unsightly remnants of trees that had been partly destroyed by fire were seen rearing their black, glistening columns twenty or thirty feet above the pure white of the snow. These, which in the language of the country are termed stubs, abounded in the open fields adjacent to the village, and were accompanied, occasionally, by the ruin of a pine or a hemlock that had been stripped of its bark, and which waved in melancholy grandeur its naked limbs to the blast, a skeleton of its former glory. But these and many other unpleasant additions to the view were unseen by the delighted Elizabeth, who, as the horses moved down the side of the mountain, saw only in gross the cluster of houses that lay like a map at her feet; the fifty smokes that were curling from the valley to the clouds; the frozen lake as it lay imbedded in mountains of evergreen, with the long shadows of the pines on its white surface, lengthening in the setting sun; the dark ribbon of water that gushed from the outlet and was winding its way toward the distant Chesapeake—the altered, though still remembered, scenes of her child hood.

Five years had wrought greater changes than a century would produce in countries where time and labor have given permanency to the works of man. To our young hunter and the Judge the scene had less novelty; though none ever emerge from the dark forests of that mountain, and witness the glorious scenery of that beauteous valley, as it bursts unexpectedly upon them, without a feeling of delight. The former cast one admiring glance from north to south, and sank his face again beneath the folds of his coat; while the latter contemplated, with philanthropic pleasure, the prospect of affluence and comfort that was expanding around him; the result of his own enterprise, and much of it the fruits of his own industry.

The cheerful sound of sleigh-bells, however, attracted the attention of the whole party, as they came jingling up the sides of the mountain, at a rate that announced a powerful team and a hard driver. The bushes which lined the highway interrupted the view, and the two sleighs were close upon each other before either was seen.

## CHAPTER IV

"How now? whose mare's dead? what's the matter?"  
—Falstaff

A large lumber sleigh, drawn by four horses, was soon seen dashing through the leafless bushes which fringed the road. The leaders were of gray, and the pole-horses of a jet-black. Bells innumerable were suspended from every part of the harness where one of the tinkling balls could be placed, while the rapid movement of the equipage, in defiance of the steep ascent, announced the desire of the driver to ring them to the utmost. The first glance at this singular arrangement acquainted the Judge with the character of those in the sleigh. It contained four male figures. On one of those stools that are used at writing desks, lashed firmly to the sides of the vehicle, was seated a little man, enveloped in a great-coat fringed with fur, in such a manner that no part of him was visible, except a face of an unvarying red color. There was an habitual upward look about the head of this gentleman, as if dissatisfied with its natural proximity to the earth; and the expression of his countenance was that of busy care. He was the charioteer, and he guided the mettled animals along the precipice with a fearless eye and a steady hand. Immediately behind him, with his face toward the other two, was a tall figure, to whose appearance not even the duplicate overcoats which he wore, aided by the corner of a horse-blanket, could give the appearance of strength. His face was protruding from beneath a woollen night cap; and, when he turned to the vehicle of Marmaduke as the sleighs approached each other, it seemed formed by nature to cut the atmosphere with the least possible resistance. The eyes alone appeared to create any obstacle, for from either side of his forehead their light-blue, glassy balls projected. The sallowness of his countenance was too permanent to be affected even by the intense cold of the evening. Opposite to this personage sat a solid, short, and square figure. No part of his form was to be discovered through his overdress, but a face that was illuminated by a pair of black eyes that gave the lie to every demure feature in his countenance. A fair, jolly wig furnished a neat and rounded outline to his visage, and he, well as the other two, wore marten-skin caps. The fourth was a meek-looking, long-visaged man, without any other protection from the cold than that which was furnished by a black surcoat, made with some little formality, but which was rather threadbare and rusty. He wore a hat of extremely decent proportions, though frequent brushing had quite destroyed its nap. His face was pale, and withal a little melancholy, or what might be termed of a studious complexion. The air had given it, just now, a light and somewhat feverish flush. The character of his whole appearance, especially contrasted to the air of humor in his next companion, was that of habitual mental care. No sooner had the two sleighs approached within speaking distance, than the driver of this fantastic equipage shouted aloud,

"Draw up in the quarry—draw up, thou king of the Greeks; draw into the quarry, Agamemnon, or I shall never be able to pass you. Welcome home, Cousin 'Duke—welcome, welcome, black-eyed Bess. Thou seest, Marina duke that I have taken the field with an assorted cargo, to do thee honor. Monsieur Le Quoi has come out with only one cap; Old Fritz would not stay to finish the bottle; and Mr. Grant has got to put the 'lastly' to his sermon, yet. Even all the horses would come—by the-bye, Judge, I must sell the blacks for you immediately; they interfere, and the nigh one is a bad goer in double harness. I can get rid of them to—"

"Sell what thou wilt, Dickon," interrupted the cheerful voice of the Judge, "so that thou leavest me my daughter and my lands. And Fritz, my old friend, this is a kind compliment, indeed, for seventy to pay to five-and-forty. Monsieur Le Quoi, I am your servant. Mr. Grant," lifting his cap, "I feel indebted to your attention. Gentlemen, I make you acquainted with my child. Yours are names with which she is very familiar."

"Velcome, velcome Tchooge," said the elder of the party, with a strong German accent. "Miss Petsy vill owe me a kiss."

"And cheerfully will I pay it, my good sir," cried the soft voice of Elizabeth; which sounded, in the clear air of the hills. Like tones of silver, amid the loud cries of Richard. "I have always a kiss for my old friend. Major Hartmann."

By this time the gentleman in the front seat, who had been addressed as Monsieur Le Quoi, had arisen with some difficulty, owing to the impediment of his overcoats, and steadying himself by placing one hand on the stool of the charioteer, with the other he removed his cap, and bowing politely to the Judge and profoundly to Elizabeth, he paid his compliments.

"Cover thy poll, Gaul, cover thy poll," cried the driver, who was Mr. Richard Jones; "cover thy poll, or the frost will pluck out the remnant of thy locks. Had the hairs on the head of Absalom been as scarce as thine, he might have been living to this day." The jokes of Richard never failed of exciting risibility, for he uniformly did honor to his own wit; and he enjoyed a hearty laugh on the present occasion, while Mr. Le Quoi resumed his seat with a polite reciprocation in his mirth. The clergyman, for such was the office of Mr. Grant, modestly, though quite affectionately, exchanged his greetings with the travellers also, when Richard prepared to turn the heads of his horses homeward.

It was in the quarry alone that he could effect this object, without ascending to the summit of the mountain. A very considerable excavation had been made in the side of the hill, at the point where Richard had succeeded in stopping the sleighs, from which the stones used for building in the village were ordinarily quarried, and in which he now attempted to turn his team. Passing itself was a task of difficulty, and frequently of danger, in that narrow road; but Richard had to meet the additional risk of turning his four-in-hand. The black civilly volunteered his services to take off the leaders, and the Judge very earnestly seconded the measure with his advice. Richard treated both proposals with great disdain.

"Why, and wherefore. Cousin 'Duke?" he exclaimed, a little angrily; "the horses are gentle as lambs. You know that I broke the leaders myself, and the pole-horses are too near my whip to be restive. Here is Mr. Le Quoi, now, who must know something about driving, because he has rode out so often with me; I will leave it to Mr. Le Quoi whether there is any danger."

It was not in the nature of the Frenchman to disappoint expectations so confidently formed; although he cast looking down the precipice which fronted him, as Richard turned his leaders into the quarry, with a pair of eyes that stood out like those of lobsters. The



German's muscles were unmoved, but his quick sight scanned each movement. Mr. Grant placed his hands on the side of the sleigh, in preparation for a spring, but moral timidity deterred him from taking the leap that bodily apprehension strongly urged him to attempt.

Richard, by a sudden application of the whip, succeeded in forcing the leaders into the snow-bank that covered the quarry; but the instant that the impatient animals suffered by the crust, through which they broke at each step, they positively refused to move an inch farther in that direction. On the contrary, finding that the cries and blows of their driver were redoubled at this juncture, the leaders backed upon the pole-horses, who in their turn backed the sleigh. Only a single log lay above the pile which upheld the road on the side toward the valley, and this was now buried in the snow. The sleigh was easily bred across so slight an impediment, and before Richard became conscious of his danger one-half of the vehicle was projected over a precipice, which fell perpendicularly more than a hundred feet. The Frenchman, who by his position had a full view of their threatened flight, instinctively threw his body as far forward as possible, and cried,

“Oh! mon cher Monsieur Deeck! mon Dieu! que faites vous!”

“Donner und blitzen, Richart!” exclaimed the veteran German, looking over the side of the sleigh with unusual emotion, “put you will preak ter sleigh and kilt ter horses!”

“Good Mr. Jones,” said the clergyman, “be prudent, good sir—be careful.”

“Get up, obstinate devils!” cried Richard, catching a bird's-eye view of his situation, and in his eagerness to move forward kicking the stool on which he sat—“get up, I say—Cousin 'Duke, I shall have to sell the grays too; they are the worst broken horses—Mr. Le Quoi” Richard was too much agitated to regard his pronunciation, of which he was commonly a little vain: “Monsieur La Quoi, pray get off my leg; you hold my leg so tight that it's no wonder the horses back.”

“Merciful Providence!” exclaimed the Judge; “they will be all killed!” Elizabeth gave a piercing shriek, and the black of Agamemnon's face changed to a muddy white.

At this critical moment, the young hunter, who during the salutations of the parties had sat in rather sullen silence, sprang from the sleigh of Marmaduke to the heads of the refractory leaders. The horses, which were yet suffering under the injudicious and somewhat random blows of Richard, were dancing up and down with that ominous movement that threatens a sudden and uncontrollable start, still pressing backward. The youth gave the leaders a powerful jerk, and they plunged aside, and re-entered the road in the position in which they were first halted. The sleigh was whirled from its dangerous position, and upset, with the runners outward. The German and the divine were thrown, rather unceremoniously, into the highway, but without danger to their bones. Richard appeared in the air, describing the segment of a circle, of which the reins were the radii, and landed, at the distance of some fifteen feet, in that snow-bank which the horses had dreaded, right end uppermost. Here, as he instinctively grasped the reins, as drowning men seize at straws, he admirably served the purpose of an anchor. The Frenchman, who was on his legs, in the act of springing from the sleigh, took an aerial flight also, much in the attitude which boys assume when they play leap-frog, and, flying off in a tangent to the curvature of his course, came into the snow-bank head foremost, where he remained, exhibiting two lathy legs on high, like scarecrows waving in a corn-field. Major Hartmann, whose self-possession had been admirably preserved during the whole evolution, was the first of the party that gained his feet and his voice.

“Ter deyvel, Richart!” he exclaimed in a voice half serious, half-comical, “put you unload your sleigh very hautily!”

It may be doubtful whether the attitude in which Mr. Grant continued for an instant after his overthrow was the one into which he had been thrown, or was assumed, in humbling himself before the Power that he revered, in thanksgiving at his escape. When he rose from his knees, he began to gaze about him, with anxious looks, after the welfare of his companions, while every joint in his body trembled with nervous agitation. There was some confusion in the faculties of Mr. Jones also: but as the mist gradually cleared from before his eyes, he saw that all was safe, and, with an air of great self-satisfaction, he cried, “Well—that was neatly saved, anyhow!—it was a lucky thought in me to hold on to the reins, or the fiery devils would have been over the mountain by this time. How well I recovered myself, 'Duke! Another moment would have been too late; but I knew just the spot where to touch the off-leader; that blow under his right flank, and the sudden jerk I gave the rein, brought them round quite in rule, I must own myself.” \*

\* The spectators, from immemorial usage, have a right to laugh at the casualties of a sleigh ride; and the Judge was no sooner certain that no one was done than he made full use of the privilege.

"Thou jerk! thou recover thyself, Dickon!" he said; "but for that brave lad yonder, thou and thy horses, or rather mine, would have been dashed to pieces—but where is Monsieur Le Quoi?"

"Oh! mon cher Juge! mon ami!" cried a smothered voice, "praise be God, I live; vill you, Mister Agamemnon, be pleas come down ici, and help me on my leg?"

The divine and the negro seized the incarcerated Gaul by his legs and extricated him from a snow-bank of three feet in depth, whence his voice had sounded as from the tombs. The thoughts of Mr. Le Quoi, immediately on his liberation, were not extremely collected; and, when he reached the light, he threw his eyes upward, in order to examine the distance he had fallen. His good-humor returned, however, with a knowledge of his safety, though it was some little time before he clearly comprehended the case.

"What, monsieur," said Richard, who was busily assisting the black in taking off the leaders; "are you there? I thought I saw you flying toward the top of the mountain just now."

"Praise be God, I no fly down into the lake," returned the Frenchman, with a visage that was divided between pain, occasioned by a few large scratches that he had received in forcing his head through the crust, and the look of complaisance that seemed natural to his pliable features.

"Ah! mon cher Mister Deeck, vat you do next?—dere be noting you no try."

"The next thing, I trust, will be to learn to drive," said the Judge, who had busied himself in throwing the buck, together with several other articles of baggage, from his own sleigh into the snow; "here are seats for you all, gentlemen; the evening grows piercingly cold, and the hour approaches for the service of Mr. Grant; we will leave friend Jones to repair the damages, with the assistance of Agamemnon, and hasten to a warm fire. Here, Dickon, are a few articles of Bess' trumpery, that you can throw into your sleigh when ready; and there is also a deer of my taking, that I will thank you to bring. Aggy! remember that there will be a visit from Santa Claus \* to-night."

\* The periodical visits of St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus, as he is termed, were never forgotten among the inhabitants of New York, until the emigration from New England brought in the opinions and usages of the Puritans, like the "bon homme de Noel." he arrives at each Christmas.

The black grinned, conscious of the bribe that was offered him for silence on the subject of the deer, while Richard, without in the least waiting for the termination of his cousin's speech, began his reply:

"Learn to drive, sayest thou, Cousin 'Duke? Is there a man in the county who knows more of horse-flesh than myself? Who broke in the filly, that no one else dare mount, though your coachman did pretend that he had tamed her before I took her in hand; but anybody could see that he lied—he was a great liar, that John—what's that, a buck?" Richard abandoned the horses, and ran to the spot where Marmaduke had thrown the deer, "It is a buck! I am amazed! Yes, here are two holes in him, he has fired both barrels, and hit him each time, Egod! how Marmaduke will brag! he is a prodigious bragger about any small matter like this now; well, to think that 'Duke has killed a buck before Christmas! There will be no such thing as living with him—they are both bad shots though, mere chance—mere chance—now, I never fired twice at a cloven foot in my life—it is hit or miss with me—dead or run away—had it been a bear, or a wild-cat, a man might have wanted both barrels. Here! you Aggy! how far off was the Judge when this buck was shot?"

"Oh! massa Richard, maybe a ten rod," cried the black, bending under one of the horses, with the pretence of fastening a buckle, but in reality to conceal the grin that opened a mouth from ear to ear.

"Ten rod!" echoed the other; "way, Aggy, the deer I Killed last winter 'was at twenty—yes! if anything it was nearer thirty than twenty. I wouldn't shoot at a deer at ten rod: besides, you may remember, Aggy, I only fired once."

"Yes, massa Richard, I 'member 'em! Natty Bumppo fire t'oder gun. You know, sir, all 'e folks say Natty kill him."

"The folks lie, you black devil!" exclaimed Richard in great heat. "I have not shot even a gray squirrel these four years, to which that old rascal has not laid claim, or some one else for him. This is a damned envious world that we live in—people are always for dividing the credit at a thing, in order to bring down merit to their own level. Now they have a story about the Patent,\* that Hiram Doolittle helped to plan the steeple to St. Paul's; when Hiram knows that it is entirely mine; a little taken front a print of his namesake in London, I own; but essentially, as to all points of genius, my own."

\* The grants of land, made either by the crown or the state, were but letters patent under the great seal, and the term "patent" is usually applied to any district of extent thus conceded; though under the crown', manorial rights being often granted with the soil, in the older counties the word "manor" is frequently used. There are many manors in New York though all political and judicial rights have ceased.

"I don't know where he come from," said the black, losing every mark of humor in an expression of admiration, "but eb'rybody say, he wounerful handsome."

"And well they may say so, Aggy," cried Richard, leaving the buck and walking up to the negro with the air of a man who has new interest awakened within him, "I think I may say, without bragging, that it is the handsomest and the most scientific country church in America. I know that the Connecticut settlers talk about their West Herfield meeting-house; but I never believe more than half what they say, they are such unconscionable braggers. Just as you have got a thing done, if they see it likely to be successful, they are always for interfering; and then it's tea to one but they lay claim to half, or even all of the credit. You may remember, Aggy, when I painted the sign of the bold dragoon for Captain Hollister there was that fellow, who was about town laying brick-dust on the houses, came one day and offered to mix what I call the streaky black, for the tail and mane; and then, because it looks like horse-hair, he tells everybody that the sign was painted by himself and Squire Jones. If Marmaduke don't send that fellow off the Patent, he may ornament his village with his own hands for me," Here Richard paused a moment, and cleared his throat by a loud hem, while the negro, who was all this

time busily engaged in preparing the sleigh, proceeded with his work in respectful silence. Owing to the religious scruples of the Judge, Aggy was the servant of Richard, who had his services for a time,\* and who, of course, commanded a legal claim to the respect of the young negro. But when any dispute between his lawful and his real master occurred, the black felt too much deference for both to express any opinion.

\* The manumission of the slaves in New York has been gradual. When public opinion became strong in their favor, then grew up a custom of buying the services of a slave, for six or eight years, with a condition to liberate him at the end of the period. Then the law provided that all born after a certain day should be free, the males at twenty-eight and the females at twenty-five. After this the owner was obliged to cause his servants to be taught to read and write before they reached the age of eighteen, and, finally, the few that remained were all unconditionally liberated in 1826, or after the publication of this tale. It was quite usual for men more or less connected with the Quakers, who never held slaves to adopt the first expedient.

In the mean while, Richard continued watching the negro as he fastened buckle after buckle, until, stealing a look of consciousness toward the other, he continued: "Now, if that young man who was in your sleigh is a real Connecticut settler, he will be telling everybody how he saved my horses, when, if he had let them alone for half a minute longer, I would have brought them in much better, without upsetting, with the whip amid rein—it spoils a horse to give him his heal, I should not wonder if I had to sell the whole team, just for that one jerk he gave them," Richard paused and hemmed; for his conscience smote him a little for censuring a man who had just saved his life. "Who is the lad, Aggy—I don't remember to have seen him before?"

The black recollected the hint about Santa Claus; and, while he briefly explained how they had taken up the person in question on the top of the mountain, he forbore to add anything concerning the accident or the wound, only saying that he believed the youth was a stranger. It was so usual for men of the first rank to take into their sleighs any one they found toiling through the snow, that Richard was perfectly satisfied with this explanation. He heard Aggy with great attention, and then remarked: "Well, if the lad has not been spoiled by the people in Templeton he may be a modest young man, and, as he certainly meant well, I shall take some notice of him—perhaps he is land-hunting—I say, Aggy, maybe he is out hunting?"

"Eh! yes, massa Richard," said the black, a little confused; for, as Richard did all the flogging, he stood in great terror of his master, in the main—"Yes, sir, I b'lieve he be."

"Had he a pack and an axe?"

"No, sir, only he rifle."

"Rifle!" exclaimed Richard, observing the confusion of The negro, which now amounted to terror. "By Jove, he killed the deer! I knew that Marmaduke couldn't kill a buck on the jump—how was it, Aggy? Tell me all about it, and I'll roast 'Duke quicker than he can roast his saddle—how was it, Aggy? the lad shot the buck, and the Judge bought it, ha! and he is taking the youth down to get the pay?"

The pleasure of this discovery had put Richard in such a good humor, that the negro's fears in some measure vanished, and he remembered the stocking of Santa Claus. After a gulp or two, he made out to reply;

"You forgit a two shot, sir?"

"Don't lie, you black rascal!" cried Richard, stepping on the snow-bank to measure the distance from his lash to the negro's back; "speak truth, or I trounce you." While speaking, the stock was slowly rising in Richard's right hand, and the lash drawing through his left, in the scientific manner with which drummers apply the cat; and Agamemnon, after turning each side of himself toward his master, and finding both equally unwilling to remain there, fairly gave in. In a very few words he made his master acquainted with the truth, at the same time earnestly conjuring Richard to protect him from the displeasure of the lodge "I'll do it, boy, I'll do it," cried the other, rubbing his hands with delight; "say nothing, but leave me to manage Duke. I have a great mind to leave the deer on the hill, and to make the fellow send for his own carcass; but no, I will let Marmaduke tell a few bounces about it before I come out upon him. Come, hurry in, Aggy, I must help to dress the lad's wound; this Yankee\* doctor knows nothing of surgery—I had to hold out Milligan's leg for him, while he cut it off."

\* In America the term Yankee is of local meaning. It is thought to be derived from the manner in which the Indians of New England pronounced the word "English," or "Yengeese." New York being originally a Dutch province, the term of course was not known there, and Farther south different dialects among the natives themselves probably produced a different pronunciation Marmaduke and his cousin, being Pennsylvanians by birth, were not Yankees in the American sense of the word.

Richard was now seated on the stool again, and, the black taking the hind seat, the steeds were put in motion toward home. As they dashed down the hill on a fast trot, the driver occasionally turned his face to Aggy, and continued speaking; for, notwithstanding their recent rupture, the most perfect cordiality was again existing between them, "This goes to prove that I turned the horses with the reins, for no man who is shot in the right shoulder can have strength enough to bring round such obstinate devils. I knew I did it from the first; but I did not want to multiply words with Marmaduke about it.—Will you bite, you villain?—hip, boys, hip! Old Natty, too, that is the best of it!—Well, well—"Duke will say no more about my deer—and the Judge fired both barrels, and hit nothing but a poor lad who was behind a pine-tree. I must help that quack to take out the buckshot for the poor fellow." In this manner Richard descended the mountain; the bells ringing, and his tongue going, until they entered the village, when the whole attention of the driver was devoted to a display of his horsemanship, to the admiration of all the gaping women and children who thronged the windows to witness the arrival of their landlord and his daughter.

## CHAPTER V

"Nathaniel's coat, sir, was not fully made,  
And Gabriel's pumps were all unpink'd i' th' heel;  
There was no link to color Peter's hat,  
And Walter's dagger was not come from sheathing;  
There were none fine, but Adam, Ralph, and Gregory."  
—Shakespeare.

After winding along the side of the mountain, the road, on reaching the gentle declivity which lay at the base of the hill, turned at a right angle to its former course, and shot down an inclined plane, directly into the village of Templeton. The rapid little stream that we have already mentioned was crossed by a bridge of hewn timber, which manifested, by its rude construction and the unnecessary size of its framework, both the value of Labor and the abundance of materials. This little torrent, whose dark waters gushed over the limestones that lined its bottom, was nothing less than one of the many sources of the Susquehanna; a river to which the Atlantic herself has extended an arm in welcome. It was at this point that the powerful team of Mr. Jones brought him up to the more sober steeds of our travellers. A small hill was risen, and Elizabeth found herself at once amidst the incongruous dwellings of the village. The street was of the ordinary width, notwithstanding the eye might embrace, in one view, thousands and tens of thousands of acres, that were yet tenanted only by the beasts of the forest. But such had been the will of her father, and such had also met the wishes of his followers. To them the road that made the most rapid approaches to the condition of the old, or, as they expressed it, the down countries, was the most pleasant; and surely nothing could look more like civilization than a city, even if it lay in a wilderness! The width of the street, for so it was called, might have been one hundred feet; but the track for the sleighs was much more limited. On either side of the highway were piled huge heaps of logs, that were daily increasing rather than diminishing in size, notwithstanding the enormous fires that might be seen through every window.

The last object at which Elizabeth gazed when they renewed their journey, after their encountre with Richard, was the sun, as it expanded in the refraction of the horizon, and over whose disk the dark umbrage of a pine was stealing, while it slowly sank behind the western hills. But his setting rays darted along the openings of the mountain he was on, and lighted the shining covering of the birches, until their smooth and glossy coats nearly rivalled the mountain sides in color. The outline of each dark pine was delineated far in the depths of the forest, and the rocks, too smooth and too perpendicular to retain the snow that had fallen, brightened, as if smiling at the leave-taking of the luminary. But at each step as they descended, Elizabeth observed that they were leaving the day behind them. Even the heartless but bright rays of a December sun were missed as they glided into the cold gloom of the valley. Along the summits of the mountains in the eastern range, it is true, the light still lingered, receding step by step from the earth into the clouds that were gathering with the evening mist, about the limited horizon, but the frozen lake lay without a shadow on its bosom; the dwellings were becoming already gloomy and indistinct, and the wood-cutters were shouldering their axes and preparing to enjoy, throughout the long evening before them, the comforts of those exhilarating fires that their labor had been supplying with fuel. They paused only to gaze at the passing sleighs, to lift their caps to Marmaduke, to exchange familiar nods with Richard, and each disappeared in his dwelling. The paper curtains dropped behind our travellers in every window, shutting from the air even the firelight of the cheerful apartments, and when the horses of her father turned with a rapid whirl into the open gate of the mansion-house, and nothing stood before her but the cold dreary stone walls of the building, as she approached them through an avenue of young and leafless poplars, Elizabeth felt as if all the loveliness of the mountain-view had vanished like the fancies of a dream. Marmaduke retained so much of his early habits as to reject the use of bells, but the equipage of Mr. Jones came dashing through the gate after them, sending its jingling sounds through every cranny of the building, and in a moment the dwelling was in an uproar.

On a stone platform, of rather small proportions, considering the size of the building, Richard and Hiram had, conjointly, reared four little columns of wood, which in their turn supported the shingled roofs of the portico—this was the name that Mr. Jones had thought proper to give to a very plain, covered entrance. The ascent to the platform was by five or six stone steps, somewhat hastily laid together, and which the frost had already begun to move from their symmetrical positions. But the evils of a cold climate and a superficial construction did not end here. As the steps lowered the platform necessarily fell also, and the foundations actually left the super structure suspended in the air, leaving an open space of a foot between the base of the pillars and the stones on which they had originally been placed. It was lucky for the whole fabric that the carpenter, who did the manual part of the labor, had fastened the canopy of this classic entrance so firmly to the side of the house that, when the base deserted the superstructure in the manner we have described, and the pillars, for the want of a foundation, were no longer of service to support the roof, the roof was able to uphold the pillars. Here was, indeed, an unfortunate gap left in the ornamental part of Richard's column; but, like the window in Aladdin's palace, it seemed only left in order to prove the fertility of its master's resources. The composite order again offered its advantages, and a second edition of the base was given, as the booksellers say, with additions and improvements. It was necessarily larger, and it was properly ornamented with mouldings; still the steps continued to yield, and, at the moment when Elizabeth returned to her father's door, a few rough wedges were driven under the pillars to keep them steady, and to prevent their weight from separating them from the pediment which they ought to have supported.

From the great door which opened into the porch emerged two or three female domestics, and one male. The latter was bareheaded, but evidently more dressed than usual, and on the whole was of so singular a formation and attire as to deserve a more minute description. He was about five feet in height, of a square and athletic frame, with a pair of shoulders that would have fitted a grenadier. His low stature was rendered the more striking by a bend forward that he was in the habit of assuming, for no apparent reason, unless it might be to give greater freedom to his arms, in a particularly sweeping swing, that they constantly practised when their master was in motion. His face was long, of a fair complexion, burnt to a fiery red; with a snub nose, cocked into an inveterate pug; a mouth of

enormous dimensions, filled with fine teeth; and a pair of blue eyes, that seemed to look about them on surrounding objects with habitual contempt. His head composed full one-fourth of his whole length, and the cue that depended from its rear occupied another. He wore a coat of very light drab cloth, with buttons as large as dollars, bearing the impression of a "foul anchor." The skirts were extremely long, reaching quite to the calf, and were broad in proportion. Beneath, there were a vest and breeches of red plush, somewhat worn and soiled. He had shoes with large buckles, and stockings of blue and white stripes.

This odd-looking figure reported himself to be a native of the county of Cornwall, in the island of Great Britain. His boyhood had passed in the neighborhood of the tin mines, and his youth as the cabin-boy of a smuggler, between Falmouth and Guernsey. From this trade he had been impressed into the service of his king, and, for the want of a better, had been taken into the cabin, first as a servant, and finally as steward to the captain. Here he acquired the art of making chowder, lobster, and one or two other sea-dishes, and, as he was fond of saying, had an opportunity of seeing the world. With the exception of one or two outposts in France, and an occasional visit to Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Deal, he had in reality seen no more of mankind, however, than if he had been riding a donkey in one of his native mines. But, being discharged from the navy at the peace of '83, he declared that, as he had seen all the civilized parts of the earth, he was inclined to make a trip to the wilds of America. We will not trace him in his brief wanderings, under the influence of that spirit of emigration that some times induces a dapper Cockney to quit his home, and lands him, before the sound of Bow-bells is out of his ears, within the roar of the cataract of Niagara; but shall only add that at a very early day, even before Elizabeth had been sent to school, he had found his way into the family of Marmaduke Temple, where, owing to a combination of qualities that will be developed in the course of the tale, he held, under Mr. Jones, the office of major-domo. The name of this worthy was Benjamin Penguillan, according to his own pronunciation; but, owing to a marvellous tale that he was in the habit of relating, concerning the length of time he had to labor to keep his ship from sinking after Rodney's victory, he had universally acquired the nick name of Ben Pump.

By the side of Benjamin, and pressing forward as if a little jealous of her station, stood a middle-aged woman, dressed in calico, rather violently contrasted in color with a tall, meagre, shapeless figure, sharp features, and a somewhat acute expression of her physiognomy. Her teeth were mostly gone, and what did remain were of a tight yellow. The skin of her nose was drawn tightly over the member, to hang in large wrinkles in her cheeks and about her mouth. She took snuff in such quantities as to create the impression that she owed the saffron of her lips and the adjacent parts to this circumstance; but it was the unvarying color of her whole face. She presided over the female part of the domestic arrangements, in the capacity of housekeeper; was a spinster, and bore the name of Remarkable Pettibone. To Elizabeth she was an entire stranger, having been introduced into the family since the death of her mother.

In addition to these, were three or four subordinate menials, mostly black, some appearing at the principal door, and some running from the end of the building, where stood the entrance to the cellar-kitchen.

Besides these, there was a general rush from Richard's kennel, accompanied with every canine tone from the howl of the wolf-dog to the petulant bark of the terrier. The master received their boisterous salutations with a variety of imitations from his own throat, when the dogs, probably from shame of being outdone, ceased their out-cry. One stately, powerful mastiff, who wore round his neck a brass collar, with "M. T." engraved in large letters on the rim, alone was silent. He walked majestically, amid the confusion, to the side of the Judge, where, receiving a kind pat or two, he turned to Elizabeth, who even stooped to kiss him, as she called him kindly by the name of "Old Brave." The animal seemed to know her, as she ascended the steps, supported by Monsieur Le Quoi and her father, in order to protect her from falling on the ice with which they were covered. He looked wistfully after her figure, and when the door closed on the whole party, he laid himself in a kennel that was placed nigh by, as if conscious that the house contained some thing of additional value to guard.

Elizabeth followed her father, who paused a moment to whisper a message to one of his domestics, into a large hall, that was dimly lighted by two candies, placed in high, old-fashioned, brass candlesticks. The door closed, and the party were at once removed from an atmosphere that was nearly at zero, to one of sixty degrees above. In the centre of the hall stood an enormous stove, the sides of which appeared to be quivering with heat; from which a large, straight pipe, leading through the ceiling above, carried off the smoke. An iron basin, containing water, was placed on this furnace, for such only it could be called, in order to preserve a proper humidity in the apartment. The room was carpeted, and furnished with convenient, substantial furniture, some of which was brought from the city, the remainder having been manufactured by the mechanics of Templeton. There was a sideboard of mahogany, inlaid with ivory, and bearing enormous handles of glittering brass, and groaning under the piles of silver plate. Near it stood a set of prodigious tables, made of the wild cherry, to imitate the imported wood of the sideboard, but plain and without ornament of any kind. Opposite to these stood a smaller table, formed from a lighter-colored wood, through the grains of which the wavy lines of the curled maple of the mountains were beautifully undulating. Near to this, in a corner, stood a heavy, old-fashioned, brass-faced clock, incased in a high box, of the dark hue of the black walnut from the seashore. An enormous settee, or sofa, covered with light chintz, stretched along the walls for nearly twenty feet on one side of the hall; and chairs of wood, painted a light yellow, with black lines that were drawn by no very steady hand, were ranged opposite, and in the intervals between the other pieces of furniture. A Fahrenheit's thermometer in a mahogany case, and with a barometer annexed, was hung against the wall, at some little distance from the stove, which Benjamin consulted, every half hour, with prodigious exactitude. Two small glass chandeliers were suspended at equal distances between the stove and outer doors, one of which opened at each end of the hall, and gilt lustres were affixed to the frame work of the numerous side-doors that led from the apartment. Some little display in architecture had been made in constructing these frames and casings, which were surmounted with pediments, that bore each a little pedestal in its centre; on these pedestals were small busts in blacked plaster-of-Paris. The style of the pedestals as well as the selection of the busts were all due to the taste of Mr. Jones. On one stood Homer, a most striking likeness, Richard affirmed, "as any one might see, for it was blind," Another bore the image of a smooth-visaged gentleman with a pointed beard, whom he called Shakespeare. A third ornament was an urn, which; from its shape, Richard was accustomed to say, intended to represent itself as holding the ashes of Dido. A fourth was certainly old Franklin, in his cap and spectacles. A fifth as surely bore the dignified composure of the face of Washington. A sixth was a nondescript, representing "a man with a shirt-collar open," to use the language of Richard, "with a laurel on his head-it was Julius Caesar or Dr. Faustus; there were good reasons for believing either."

The walls were hung with a dark lead-colored English paper that represented Britannia weeping over the tomb of Wolfe. The hero himself stood at a little distance from the mourning goddess, and at the edge of the paper. Each width contained the figure, with the slight exception of one arm of the general, which ran over on the next piece, so that when Richard essayed, with his own hands, to put together this delicate outline, some difficulties occurred that prevented a nice conjunction; and Britannia had reason to lament, in addition to the loss of her favorite's life, numberless cruel amputations of his right arm.

The luckless cause of these unnatural divisions now announced his presence in the hall by a loud crack of his whip.

"Why, Benjamin! you Ben Pump! is this the manner in which you receive the heiress?" he cried. "Excuse him, Cousin Elizabeth. The arrangements were too intricate to be trusted to every one; but now I am here, things will go on better.—Come, light up, Mr. Penguillan, light up, light up, and let us see One another's faces. Well, 'Duke, I have brought home your deer; what is to be done with it, ha?"

"By the Lord, squire," commenced Benjamin, in reply, first giving his mouth a wipe with the back of his hand, "if this here thing had been ordered sum'at earlier in the day, it might have been got up, d'ye see, to your liking. I had mustered all hands and was exercising candles, when you hove in sight; but when the women heard your bells they started an end, as if they were riding the boat swain's colt; and if-so-be there is that man in the house who can bring up a parcel of women when they have got headway on them, until they've run out the end of their rope, his name is not Benjamin Pump. But Miss Betsey here must have altered more than a privateer in disguise, since she has got on her woman's duds, if she will take offence with an old fellow for the small matter of lighting a few candles."

Elizabeth and her father continued silent, for both experienced the same sensation on entering the hall. The former had resided one year in the building before she left home for school, and the figure of its lamented mistress was missed by both husband and child.

But candles had been placed in the chandeliers and lustres, and the attendants were so far recovered from surprise as to recollect their use; the oversight was immediately remedied, and in a minute the apartment was in a blaze of light.

The slight melancholy of our heroine and her father was banished by this brilliant interruption; and the whole party began to lay aside the numberless garments they had worn in the air.

During this operation Richard kept up a desultory dialogue with the different domestics, occasionally throwing out a remark to the Judge concerning the deer; but as his conversation at such moments was much like an accompaniment on a piano, a thing that is heard without being attended to, we will not undertake the task of recording his diffuse discourse,

The instant that Remarkable Pettibone had executed her portion of the labor in illuminating, she returned to a position near Elizabeth, with the apparent motive of receiving the clothes that the other threw aside, but in reality to examine, with an air of curiosity—not unmixed with jealousy—the appearance of the lady who was to supplant her in the administration of their domestic economy. The housekeeper felt a little appalled, when, after cloaks, coats, shawls, and socks had been taken off in succession, the large black hood was removed, and the dark ringlets, shining like the raven's wing, fell from her head, and left the sweet but commanding features of the young lady exposed to view. Nothing could be fairer and more spotless than the forehead of Elizabeth, and preserve the appearance of life and health. Her nose would have been called Grecian, but for a softly rounded swell, that gave in character to the feature what it lost in beauty. Her mouth, at first sight, seemed only made for love; but, the instant that its muscles moved, every expression that womanly dignity could utter played around it with the flexibility of female grace. It spoke not only to the ear, but to the eye. So much, added to a form of exquisite proportions, rather full and rounded for her years, and of the tallest medium height, she inherited from her mother. Even the color of her eye, the arched brows, and the long silken lashes, came from the same source; but its expression was her father's. Inert and composed, it was soft, benevolent, and attractive; but it could be roused, and that without much difficulty. At such moments it was still beautiful, though it was a little severe. As the last shawl fell aside, and she stood dressed in a rich blue riding-habit, that fitted her form with the nicest exactness; her cheeks burning with roses, that bloomed the richer for the heat of the hall, and her eyes lightly suffused with moisture that rendered their ordinary beauty more dazzling, and with every feature of her speaking countenance illuminated by the lights that flared around her, Remarkable felt that her own power had ended.

The business of unrobing had been simultaneous. Marmaduke appeared in a suit of plain, neat black; Monsieur Le Quoi in a coat of snuff-color, covering a vest of embroidery, with breeches, and silk stockings, and buckles—that were commonly thought to be of paste. Major Hartmann wore a coat of sky-blue, with large brass buttons, a club wig, and boots; and Mr. Richard Jones had set off his dapper little form in a frock of bottle-green, with bullet-buttons, by one of which the sides were united over his well-rounded waist, opening above, so as to show a jacket of red cloth, with an undervest of flannel, faced with green velvet, and below, so as to exhibit a pair of buckskin breeches, with long, soiled, white top-boots, and spurs; one of the latter a little bent, from its recent attacks on the stool.

When the young lady had extricated herself from her garments, she was at liberty to gaze about her, and to examine not only the household over which she was to preside, but also the air and manner in which the domestic arrangements were conducted. Although there was much incongruity in the furniture and appearance of the hall, there was nothing mean. The floor was carpeted, even in its remotest corners. The brass candlesticks, the gilt lustres, and the glass chandeliers, whatever might be their keeping as to propriety and taste, were admirably kept as to all the purposes of use and comfort. They were clean and glittering in the strong light of the apartment.

Compared with the chill aspect of the December night without, the warmth and brilliancy of the apartment produced an effect that was not unlike enchantment. Her eye had not time to detect, in detail, the little errors which in truth existed, but was glancing around her in de light, when an object arrested her view that was in strong contrast to the smiling faces and neatly attired person ages who had thus assembled to do honor to the heiress of Templeton.

In a corner of the hall near the grand entrance stood the young hunter, unnoticed, and for the moment apparently forgotten. But even the forgetfulness of the Judge, which, under the influence of strong emotion, had banished the recollection of the wound of this stranger, seemed surpassed by the absence of mind in the youth himself. On entering the apartment, he had mechanically lifted his cap, and exposed a head covered with hair that rivalled, in color and gloss, the locks of Elizabeth. Nothing could have wrought a greater transformation than the single act of removing the rough fox-skin cap. If there was much that was prepossessing in the countenance of

the young hunter, there was something even noble in the rounded outlines of his head and brow. The very air and manner with which the member haughtily maintained itself over the coarse and even wild attire in which the rest of his frame was clad, bespoke not only familiarity with a splendor that in those new settlements was thought to be unequalled, but something very like contempt also.

The hand that held the cap rested lightly on the little ivory-mounted piano of Elizabeth, with neither rustic restraint nor obtrusive vulgarity. A single finger touched the instrument, as if accustomed to dwell on such places. His other arm was extended to its utmost length, and the hand grasped the barrel of his long rifle with something like convulsive energy. The act and the attitude were both involuntary, and evidently proceeded from a feeling much deeper than that of vulgar surprise. His appearance, connected as it was with the rough exterior of his dress, rendered him entirely distinct from the busy group that were moving across the other end of the long hall, occupied in receiving the travellers and exchanging their welcomes; and Elizabeth continued to gaze at him in wonder. The contraction of the stranger's brows increased as his eyes moved slowly from one object to another. For moments the expression of his countenance was fierce, and then again it seemed to pass away in some painful emotion. The arm that was extended bent and brought the hand nigh to his face, when his head dropped upon it, and concealed the wonderfully speaking lineaments.

"We forget, dear sir, the strange gentleman" (for her life Elizabeth could not call him otherwise) "whom we have brought here for assistance, and to whom we owe every attention."

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction of those of the speaker, and the youth rather proudly elevated his head again, while he answered:

"My wound is trifling, and I believe that Judge Temple sent for a physician the moment we arrived."

"Certainly," said Marmaduke: "I have not forgotten the object of thy visit, young man, nor the nature of my debt."

"Oh!" exclaimed Richard, with something of a waggish leer, "thou owest the lad for the venison, I suppose that thou killed, Cousin 'Duke! Marmaduke! Marmaduke! That was a marvellous tale of thine about the buck! Here, young man, are two dollars for the deer, and Judge Temple can do no less than pay the doctor. I shall charge you nothing for my services, but you shall not fare the worst for that. Come, come, 'Duke, don't be down hearted about it; if you missed the buck, you contrived to shoot this poor fellow through a pine-tree. Now I own that you have beat me; I never did such a thing in all my life."

"And I hope never will," returned the Judge, "if you are to experience the uneasiness that I have suffered; but be of good cheer, my young friend, the injury must be small, as thou movest thy arm with apparent freedom."

"Don't make the matter worse, 'Duke, by pretending to talk about surgery," interrupted Mr. Jones, with a contemptuous wave of the hand: "it is a science that can only be learned by practice. You know that my grandfather was a doctor, but you haven't got a drop of medical blood in your veins. These kind of things run in families. All my family by my father's side had a knack at physic. 'There was my uncle that was killed at Brandywine—he died as easy again as any other man the regiment, just from knowing how to hold his breath naturally. Few men know how to breathe naturally."

"I doubt not, Dickon," returned the Judge, meeting the bright smile which, in spite of himself, stole over the stranger's features, "that thy family thoroughly understand the art of letting life slip through their fingers."

Richard heard him quite coolly, and putting a hand in either pocket of his surcoat, so as to press forward the skirts, began to whistle a tune; but the desire to reply overcame his philosophy, and with great heat he exclaimed:

"You may affect to smile, Judge Temple, at hereditary virtues, if you please; but there is not a man on your Patent who don't know better. Here, even this young man, who has never seen anything but bears, and deer, and woodchucks, knows better than to believe virtues are not transmitted in families. Don't you, friend?"

"I believe that vice is not," said the stranger abruptly; his eye glancing from the father to the daughter.

"The squire is right, Judge," observed Benjamin, with a knowing nod of his head toward Richard, that bespoke the cordiality between them, "Now, in the old country, the king's majesty touches for the evil, and that is a disorder that the greatest doctor in the fleet, or for the matter of that admiral either: can't cure; only the king's majesty or a man that's been hanged. Yes, the squire is right; for if-so-be that he wasn't, how is it that the seventh son always is a doctor, whether he ships for the cockpit or not? Now when we fell in with the mounsheers, under De Grasse, d'ye see, we hid aboard of us a doctor—"

"Very well, Benjamin," interrupted Elizabeth, glancing her eyes from the hunter to Monsieur Le Quoi, who was most politely attending to what fell from each individual in succession, "you shall tell me of that, and all your entertaining adventures together; just now, a room must be prepared, in which the arm of this gentleman can be dressed."

"I will attend to that myself, Cousin Elizabeth," observed Richard, somewhat haughtily. "The young man will not suffer because Marmaduke chooses to be a little obstinate. Follow me, my friend, and I will examine the hurt myself."

"It will be well to wait for the physician," said the hunter coldly; "he cannot be distant."

Richard paused and looked at the speaker, a little astonished at the language, and a good deal appalled at the refusal. He construed the latter into an act of hostility, and, placing his hands in the pockets again, he walked up to Mr. Grant, and, putting his face close to the countenance of the divine, said in an undertone:

"Now, mark my words—there will be a story among the settlers, that all our necks would have been broken but for that fellow—as if I did not know how to drive. Why, you might have turned the horses yourself, sir; nothing was easier; it was only pulling hard on the nigh rein, and touching the off flank of the leader. I hope, my dear sir, you are not at all hurt by the upset the lad gave us?"

The reply was interrupted by the entrance of the village physician.

## CHAPTER VI

"And about his shelves,  
A beggarly account of empty boxes,  
Green earthen pots, bladders, and musty seeds.  
Remnants of packthread, and old cakes of roses,  
Were thinly scattered to make up a show."  
—Shakespeare.

Doctor Elnathan Todd, for such was the name of the man of physic, was commonly thought to be, among the settlers, a gentleman of great mental endowments, and he was assuredly of rare personal proportions. In height he measured, without his shoes, exactly six feet and four inches. His hands, feet, and knees corresponded in every respect with this formidable stature; but every other part of his frame appeared to have been intended for a man several sizes smaller, if we except the length of the limbs. His shoulders were square, in one sense at least, being in a right line from one side to the other; but they were so narrow, that the long dangling arms they supported seemed to issue out of his back. His neck possessed, in an eminent degree, the property of length to which we have alluded, and it was topped by a small bullet-head that exhibited on one side a bush of bristling brown hair and on the other a short, twinkling visage, that appeared to maintain a constant struggle with itself in order to look wise. He was the youngest son of a farmer in the western part of Massachusetts, who, being in some what easy circumstances, had allowed this boy to shoot up to the height we have mentioned, without the ordinary interruptions of field labor, wood-chopping, and such other toils as were imposed on his brothers. Elnathan was indebted for this exemption from labor in some measure to his extraordinary growth, which, leaving him pale, inanimate, and listless, induced his tender mother to pronounce him "a sickly boy, and one that was not equal to work, but who might earn a living comfortably enough by taking to pleading law, or turning minister, or doctoring, or some such like easy calling." Still, there was great uncertainty which of these vocations the youth was best endowed to fill; but, having no other employment, the stripling was constantly lounging about the homestead, munching green apples and hunting for sorrel; when the same sagacious eye that had brought to light his latent talents seized upon this circumstance as a clew to his future path through the turmoils of the world. "Elnathan was cut out for a doctor, she knew, for he was forever digging for herbs, and tasting all kinds of things that grow'd about the lots. Then again he had a natural love for doctor-stuff, for when she had left the bilious pills out for her man, all nicely covered with maple sugar just ready to take, Nathan had come in and swallowed them for all the world as if they were nothing, while Ichabod (her husband) could never get one down without making such desperate faces that it was awful to look on."

This discovery decided the matter. Elnathan, then about fifteen, was, much like a wild colt, caught and trimmed by clipping his bushy locks; dressed in a suit of homespun, dyed in the butternut bark; furnished with a "New Testament" and a "Webster's Spelling Book," and sent to school. As the boy was by nature quite shrewd enough, and had previously, at odd times, laid the foundations of reading, writing, and arithmetic, he was soon conspicuous in the school for his learning. The delighted mother had the gratification of hearing, from the lips of the master, that her son was a "prodigious boy, and far above all his class." He also thought that "the youth had a natural love for doctoring, as he had known him frequently advise the smaller children against eating to much; and, once or twice, when the ignorant little things had persevered in opposition to Elnathan's advice, he had known her son empty the school-baskets with his own mouth, to prevent the consequences."

Soon after this comfortable declaration from his school master, the lad was removed to the house of the village doctor, a gentleman whose early career had not been unlike that of our hero where he was to be seen sometimes watering a horse, at others watering medicines, blue, yellow, and red: then again he might be noticed lolling under an apple-tree, with Ruddiman's Latin Grammar in his hand, and a corner of Denman's Midwifery sticking out of a pocket; for his instructor held it absurd to teach his pupil how to dispatch a patient regularly from this world, before he knew how to bring him into it.

This kind of life continued for a twelvemonth, when he suddenly appeared at a meeting in a long coat (and well did it deserve the name!) of black homespun, with little bootees, bound with an uncolored calf-skin for the want of red morocco.

Soon after he was seen shaving with a dull razor. Three or four months had scarce elapsed before several elderly ladies were observed hastening toward the house of a poor woman in the village, while others were running to and fro in great apparent distress. One or two boys were mounted, bareback, on horses, and sent off at speed in various directions. Several indirect questions were put concerning the place where the physician was last seen; but all would not do; and at length Elnathan was seen issuing from his door with a very grave air, preceded by a little white-headed boy, out of breath, trotting before him. The following day the youth appeared in the street, as the highway was called, and the neighborhood was much edified by the additional gravity of his air. The same week he bought a new razor; and the succeeding Sunday he entered the meeting-house with a red silk handkerchief in his hand, and with an extremely demure countenance. In the evening he called upon a young woman of his own class in life, for there were no others to be found, and, when he was left alone with the fair, he was called, for the first time in his life, Dr. Todd, by her prudent mother. The ice once broken in this manner, Elnathan was greeted from every mouth with his official appellation.

Another year passed under the superintendence of the same master, during which the young physician had the credit of "riding with the old doctor," although they were generally observed to travel different roads. At the end of that period, Dr. Todd attained his legal majority. He then took a jaunt to Boston to purchase medicines, and, as some intimated, to walk the hospital; we know not how the latter might have been, but, if true, he soon walked through it, for he returned within a fortnight, bringing with him a suspicious-looking box, that smelled powerfully of brimstone.

The next Sunday he was married, and the following morning he entered a one-horse sleigh with his bride, having before him the box we have mentioned, with another filled with home-made household linen, a paper-covered trunk with a red umbrella lashed to it, a pair



of quite new saddle-bags, and a handbox. The next intelligence that his friends received of the bride and bridegroom was, that the latter was "settled in the new countries, and well to do as a doctor in Templeton, in York State!"

If a Templar would smile at the qualifications of Marmaduke to fill the judicial seat he occupied, we are certain that a graduate of Leyden or Edinburgh would be extremely amused with this true narration of the servitude of Elnathan in the temple of Aesculapius. But the same consolation was afforded to both the jurist and the leech, for Dr. Todd was quite as much on a level with his own peers of the profession in that country, as was Marmaduke with his brethren on the bench.

Time and practice did wonders for the physician. He was naturally humane, but possessed of no small share of moral courage; or, in other words, he was chary of the lives of his patients, and never tried uncertain experiments on such members of society as were considered useful; but, once or twice, when a luckless vagrant had come under his care, he was a little addicted to trying the effects of every phial in his saddle-bags on the strangers constitution. Happily their number was small, and in most cases their natures innocent. By these means Elnathan had acquired a certain degree of knowledge in fevers and agues, and could talk with judgment concerning intermittents, remittents, tertians, quotidiens, etc. In certain cutaneous disorders very prevalent in new settlements, he was considered to be infallible; and there was no woman on the Patent but would as soon think of becoming a mother without a husband as without the assistance of Dr. Todd. In short, he was rearing, on this foundation of sand a superstructure cemented by practice, though composed of somewhat brittle materials. He however, occasionally renewed his elementary studies, and, with the observation of a shrewd mind, was comfortably applying his practice to his theory.

In surgery, having the least experience, and it being a business that spoke directly to the senses, he was most apt to distrust his own powers; but he had applied oils to several burns, cut round the roots of sundry defective teeth, and sewed up the wounds of numberless wood choppers, with considerable éclat, when an unfortunate jobber suffered a fracture of his leg by the tree that he had been felling. It was on this occasion that our hero encountered the greatest trial his nerves and moral feeling had ever sustained. In the hour of need, however, he was not found wanting. Most of the amputations in the new settlements, and they were quite frequent, were performed by some one practitioner who, possessing originally a reputation, was enabled by this circumstance to acquire an experience that rendered him deserving of it; and Elnathan had been present at one or two of these operations. But on the present occasion the man of practice was not to be obtained, and the duty fell, as a matter of course, to the share of Mr. Todd. He went to work with a kind of blind desperation, observing, at the same time, all the externals of decent gravity and great skill. The sufferer's name was Milligan, and it was to this event that Richard alluded, when he spoke of assisting the doctor at an amputation by holding the leg! The limb was certainly cut off, and the patient survived the operation. It was, however, two years before poor Milligan ceased to complain that they had buried the leg in so narrow a box that it was straitened for room; he could feel the pain shooting up from the inhumed fragment into the living members. Marmaduke suggested that the fault might lie in the arteries and nerves; but Richard, considering the amputation as part of his own handiwork, strongly repelled the insinuation, at the same time declaring that he had often heard of men who could tell when it was about to rain, by the toes of amputated limbs. After two or three years, notwithstanding, Milligan's complaints gradually diminished, the leg was dug up, and a larger box furnished, and from that hour no one had heard the sufferer utter another complaint on the subject. This gave the public great confidence in Dr. Todd, whose reputation was hourly increasing, and, luckily for his patients, his information also.

Notwithstanding Dr. Todd's practice, and his success with the leg, he was not a little appalled on entering the hall of the mansion-house. It was glaring with the light of day; it looked so imposing, compared with the hastily built and scantily furnished apartments which he frequented in his ordinary practice, and contained so many well-dressed persons and anxious faces, that his usually firm nerves were a good deal discomposed. He had heard from the messenger who summoned him, that it was a gun-shot wound, and had come from his own home, wading through the snow, with his saddle-bags thrown over his arm, while separated arteries, penetrated lungs, and injured vitals were whirling through his brain, as if he were stalking over a field of battle, instead of Judge Temple's peaceable in closure.

The first object that met his eye, as he moved into the room, was Elizabeth in her riding-habit, richly laced with gold cord, her fine form bending toward him, and her face expressing deep anxiety in every one of its beautiful features. The enormous knees of the physician struck each other with a noise that was audible; for, in the absent state of his mind, he mistook her for a general officer, perforated with bullets, hastening from the field of battle to implore assistance. The delusion, however, was but momentary, and his eye glanced rapidly from the daughter to the earnest dignity of the father's countenance; thence to the busy strut of Richard, who was cooling his impatience at the hunter's indifference to his assistance, by pacing the hall and cracking his whip; from him to the Frenchman, who had stood for several minutes unheeded with a chair for the lady; thence to Major Hartmann, who was very coolly lighting a pipe three feet long by a candle in one of the chandeliers; thence to Mr. Grant, who was turning over a manuscript with much earnestness at one of the lustres; thence to Remarkable, who stood, with her arms demurely folded before her, surveying, with a look of admiration and envy, the dress and beauty of the young lady; and from her to Benjamin, who, with his feet standing wide apart, and his arms akimbo, was balancing his square little body with the indifference of one who is accustomed to wounds and bloodshed. All of these seemed to be unhurt, and the operator began to breathe more freely; but, before he had time to take a second look, the Judge, advancing, shook him kindly by the hand, and spoke.

"Thou art welcome, my good sir, quite welcome, indeed; here is a youth whom I have unfortunately wounded in shooting a deer this evening, and who requires some of thy assistance."

"Shooting at a deer, 'Duke," interrupted Richard—"shooting at a deer. Who do you think can prescribe, unless he knows the truth of the case? It is always so with some people; they think a doctor can be deceived with the same impunity as another man."

"Shooting at a deer, truly," returned the Judge, smiling, "although it is by no means certain that I did not aid in destroying the buck; but the youth is injured by my hand, be that as it may; and it is thy skill that must cure him, and my pocket shall amply reward thee for it."

"Two ver good tings to depend on," observed Monsieur Le Quoi, bowing politely, with a sweep of his head to the Judge and to the

practitioner.

"I thank you, monsieur," returned the Judge; "but we keep the young man in pain. Remarkable, thou wilt please to provide linen for lint and bandages."

This remark caused a cessation of the compliments, and induced the physician to turn an inquiring eye in the direction of his patient. During the dialogue the young hunter had thrown aside his overcoat, and now stood clad in a plain suit of the common, light-colored homespun of the country, that was evidently but recently made. His hand was on the lapels of his coat, in the attitude of removing the garment, when he suddenly suspended the movement, and looked toward the commiserating Elizabeth, who was standing in an unchanged posture, too much absorbed with her anxious feelings to heed his actions. A slight color appeared on the brow of the youth.

"Possibly the sight of blood may alarm the lady; I will retire to another room while the wound is dressing."

"By no means," said Dr. Todd, who, having discovered that his patient was far from being a man of importance, felt much emboldened to perform the duty. "The strong light of these candles is favorable to the operation, and it is seldom that we hard students enjoy good eyesight."

While speaking, Elnathan placed a pair of large iron-rimmed spectacles on his face, where they dropped, as it were by long practice, to the extremity of his slim pug nose; and, if they were of no service as assistants to his eyes, neither were they any impediment to his vision; for his little gray organs were twinkling above them like two stars emerging from the envious cover of a cloud. The action was unheeded by all but Remarkable, who observed to Benjamin:

"Dr. Todd is a comely man to look on, and despu't pretty. How well he seems in spectacles! I declare, they give a grand look to a body's face. I have quite a great mind to try them myself."

The speech of the stranger recalled the recollection of Miss Temple, who started as if from deep abstraction, and, coloring excessively, she motioned to a young woman who served in the capacity of maid, and retired with an air of womanly reserve.

The field was now left to the physician and his patient, while the different personages who remained gathered around the latter, with faces expressing the various degrees of interest that each one felt in his condition. Major Hartmann alone retained his seat, where he continued to throw out vast quantities of smoke, now rolling his eyes up to the ceiling, as if musing on the uncertainty of life, and now bending them on the wounded man, with an expression that bespoke some consciousness of his situation.

In the mean time Elnathan, to whom the sight of a gun shot wound was a perfect novelty, commenced his preparations with a solemnity and care that were worthy of the occasion. An old shirt was procured by Benjamin, and placed in the hand of the other, who tore divers bandages from it, with an exactitude that marked both his own skill and the importance of the operation.

When this preparatory measure was taken, Dr. Todd selected a piece of the shirt with great care, and handing to Mr. Jones, without moving a muscle, said: "Here, Squire Jones, you are well acquainted with these things; will you please to scrape the lint? It should be fine and soft, you know, my dear sir; and be cautious that no cotton gets in, or it may p'izen the wound. The shirt has been made with cotton thread, but you can easily pick it out."

Richard assumed the office, with a nod at his cousin, that said quite plainly, "You see this fellow can't get along without me;" and began to scrape the linen on his knee with great diligence.

A table was now spread with phials, boxes of salve, and divers surgical instruments. As the latter appeared in succession, from a case of red morocco, their owner held up each implement to the strong light of the chandelier, near to which he stood, and examined it with the nicest care. A red silk handkerchief was frequently applied to the glittering steel, as if to remove from the polished surfaces the least impediment which might exist to the most delicate operation. After the rather scantily furnished pocket-case which contained these instruments was exhausted, the physician turned to his saddle-bags, and produced various phials, filled with liquids of the most radiant colors. These were arranged in due order by the side of the murderous saws, knives, and scissors, when Elnathan stretched his long body to its utmost elevation, placing his hand on the small of his back as if for support, and looked about him to discover what effect this display of professional skill was likely to produce on the spectators.

"Upon my wort, toctor," observed Major Hartmann, with a roguish roll of his little black eyes, but with every other feature of his face in a state of perfect rest, "put you have a very pretty pocket-book of tools tere, and your toctor-stuff glitters as if it was petter for ter eyes as for ter pelly."

Elnathan gave a hem—one that might have been equally taken for that kind of noise which cowards are said to make in order to awaken their dormant courage, or for a natural effort to clear the throat; if for the latter it was successful; for, turning his face to the veteran German, he said:

"Very true, Major Hartmann, very true, sir; a prudent man will always strive to make his remedies agreeable to the eyes, though they may not altogether suit the stomach. It is no small part of our art, sir," and he now spoke with the confidence of a man who understood his subject, "to reconcile the patient to what is for his own good, though at the same time it may be unpalatable."

"Sartain! Dr. Todd is right," said Remarkable, "and has Scriptor for what he says. The Bible tells us how things may be sweet to the mouth, and bitter to the inwards."

"True, true," interrupted the Judge, a little impatiently; "but here is a youth who needs no deception to lure him to his own benefit. I see, by his eye, that he fears nothing more than delay."

The stranger had, without assistance, bared his own shoulder, when the slight perforation produced by the pas sage of the buckshot was plainly visible. The intense cold of the evening had stopped the bleeding, and Dr. Todd, casting a furtive glance at the wound, thought it by no means so formidable an affair as he had anticipated. Thus encouraged, he approached his patient, and made some indication of an intention to trace the route that had been taken by the lead.

Remarkable often found occasions, in after days, to recount the minutiae of that celebrated operation; and when she arrived at this point she commonly proceeded as follows: "And then the doctor tuck out of the pocket book a long thing, like a knitting-needle, with a

button fastened to the end on't; and then he pushed it into the wound and then the young man looked awful; and then I thought I should have swaned away—I felt in sitch a dispu't taking; and then the doctor had run it right through his shoulder, and shoved the bullet out on tother side; and so Dr. Todd cured the young man—Of a ball that the Judge had shot into him—for all the world as easy as I could pick out a splinter with my darning-needle.”

Such were the impressions of Remarkable on the subject; and such doubtless were the opinions of most of those who felt it necessary to entertain a species of religious veneration for the skill of Elnathan; but such was far from the truth.

When the physician attempted to introduce the instrument described by Remarkable, he was repulsed by the stranger, with a good deal of decision, and some little contempt, in his manner.

“I believe, sir,” he said, “that a probe is not necessary; the shot has missed the bone, and has passed directly through the arm to the opposite side, where it remains but skin deep, and whence, I should think, it might be easily extracted.”

“The gentleman knows best,” said Dr. Todd, laying down the probe with the air of a man who had assumed it merely in compliance with forms; and, turning to Richard, he fingered the lint with the appearance of great care and foresight. “Admirably well scraped, Squire Jones: it is about the best lint I have ever seen. I want your assistance, my good sir, to hold the patient's arm while I make an incision for the ball. Now, I rather guess there is not another gentleman present who could scrape the lint so well as Squire Jones!”

“Such things run in families,” observed Richard, rising with alacrity to render the desired assistance. “My father, and my grandfather before him, were both celebrated for their knowledge of surgery; they were not, like Marmaduke here, puffed up with an accidental thing, such as the time when he drew in the hip-joint of the man who was thrown from his horse; that was the fall before you came into the settlement, doctor; but they were men who were taught the thing regularly, spending half their lives in learning those little niceties; though, for the matter of that, my grandfather was a college-bred physician, and the best in the colony, too—that is, in his neighborhood.”

“So it goes with the world, squire,” cried Benjamin; “if so be that a man wants to walk the quarter-deck with credit, d'ye see, and with regular built swabs on his shoulders, he mustn't think to do it by getting in at the cabin windows. There are two ways to get into a top, besides the lubber-holes. The true way to walk aft is to begin forrard; tho'f it be only in a humble way, like myself, d'ye see, which was from being only a hander of topgallant sails, and a stower of the flying-jib, to keeping the key of the captain's locker.”

Benjamin speaks quite to the purpose,' continued Richard, “I dare say that he has often seen shot extracted in the different ships in which he has served; suppose we get him to hold the basin; he must be used to the sight of blood.”

“That he is, squire, that he is,” interrupted the cidevant steward; “many's the good shot, round, double-headed, and grape, that I've seen the doctors at work on. For the matter of that, I was in a boat, alongside the ship, when they cut out the twelve-pound shot from the thigh of the captain of the Foodyrong, one of Mounsheer Ler Quaw's countrymen!” \*

\* It is possible that the reader may start at this declaration of Benjamin, but those who have lived in the new settlements of America are too much accustomed to hear of these European exploits to doubt it.

"A twelve-pound ball from the thigh of a human being;" exclaimed Mr. Grant, with great simplicity, dropping the sermon he was again reading, and raising his spectacles to the top of his forehead.

"A twelve-pounder!" echoed Benjamin, staring around him with much confidence; "a twelve-pounder! ay! a twenty-four-pound shot can easily be taken from a man's body, if so be a doctor only knows how, There's Squire Jones, now, ask him, sir; he reads all the books; ask him if he never fell in with a page that keeps the reckoning of such things."

"Certainly, more important operations than that have been performed," observed Richard; "the encyclopaedia mentions much more incredible circumstances than that, as, I dare say, you know, Dr. Todd."

"Certainly, there are incredible tales told in the encyclopaedias," returned Elnathan, "though I cannot say that I have ever seen, myself, anything larger than a musket ball extracted."

During this discourse an incision had been made through the skin of the young hunter's shoulder, and the lead was laid bare. Elnathan took a pair of glittering forceps, and was in the act of applying them to the wound, when a sudden motion of the patient caused the shot to fall out of itself, The long arm and broad hand of the operator were now of singular service; for the latter expanded itself, and caught the lead, while at the same time an extremely ambiguous motion was made by its brother, so as to leave it doubtful to the spectators how great was its agency in releasing the shot, Richard, however, put the matter at rest by exclaiming:

"Very neatly done, doctor! I have never seen a shot more neatly extracted; and I dare say Benjamin will say the same."

"Why, considering," returned Benjamin, "I must say that it was ship-shape and Brister-fashion. Now all that the doctor has to do, is to clap a couple of plugs in the holes, and the lad will float in any gale that blows in these here hills."

"I thank you, sir, for what you have done," said the youth, with a little distance; "but here is a man who will take me under his care, and spare you all, gentlemen, any further trouble on my account."

The whole group turned their heads in surprise, and beheld, standing at one of the distant doors of the hall, the person of Indian John.

## CHAPTER VII.

"From Sesquehanna's utmost springs,  
where savage tribes pursue their game,  
His blanket tied with yellow strings,  
The shepherd of the forest came."—Freneau.

Before the Europeans, or, to use a more significant term, the Christians, dispossessed the original owners of the soil, all that section of country which contains the New England States, and those of the Middle which lie east of the mountains, was occupied by two great nations of Indians, from whom had descended numberless tribes. But, as the original distinctions between these nations were marked by a difference in language, as well as by repeated and bloody wars, they were never known to amalgamate, until after the power and inroads of the whites had reduced some of the tribes to a state of dependence that rendered not only their political, but, considering the wants and habits of a savage, their animal existence also, extremely precarious.

These two great divisions consisted, on the one side, of the Five, or, as they were afterward called, the Six Nations, and their allies; and, on the other, of the Lenni Lenape, or Delawares, with the numerous and powerful tribes that owned that nation as their grandfather. The former was generally called, by the Anglo-Americans Iroquois, or the Six Nations, and sometimes Mingoes. Their appellation among their rivals, seems generally to have been the Mengwe, or Maqua. They consisted of the tribes or, as their allies were fond of asserting, in order to raise their consequence, of the several nations of the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas; who ranked, in the confederation in the order in which they are named. The Tuscaroras were admitted to this union near a century after its foundation, and thus completed the number of six.

Of the Lenni Lenape, or as they were called by the whites, from the circumstances of their holding their great council-fire on the banks of that river, the Delaware nation, the principal tribes, besides that which bore the generic name, were the Mahicanni, Mohicans, or Mohegans, and the Nanticokes, or Nentigoes. Of these the latter held the country along the waters of the Chesapeake and the seashore; while the Mohegans occupied the district between the Hudson and the ocean, including much of New England. Of course these two tribes were the first who were dispossessed of their lands by the Europeans.

The wars of a portion of the latter are celebrated among us as the wars of King Philip; but the peaceful policy of William Penn, or Miquon, as he was termed by the natives, effected its object with less difficulty, though not with less certainty. As the natives gradually disappeared from the country of the Mohegans, some scattering families sought a refuge around the council-fire of the mother tribe, or the Delawares.

This people had been induced to suffer themselves to be called women by their old enemies, the Mingoes, or Iroquois. After the latter, having in vain tried the effects of hostility, had recourse in artifice in order to prevail over their rivals. According to this declaration, the Delawares were to cultivate the arts of peace, and to intrust their defence entirely to the men, or warlike tribes of the Six Nations.

This state of things continued until the war of the Revolution. When the Lenni Lenape formally asserted their independence, and fearlessly declared that they were again men. But, in a government so peculiarly republican as the Indian polity, it was not at all times an easy task to restrain its members within the rules of the nation. Several fierce and renowned warriors of the Mohegans, finding the conflict with the whites to be in vain, sought a refuge with their grandfather, and brought with them the feelings and principles that had so long distinguished them in their own tribe. These chieftains kept alive, in some measure, the martial spirit of the Delawares; and would, at times, lead small parties against their ancient enemies, or such other foes as incurred their resentment.

Among these warriors was one race particularly famous for their prowess, and for those qualities that render an Indian hero celebrated. But war, time, disease, and want had conspired to thin their number; and the sole representative of this once renowned family now stood in the hall of Marmaduke Temple. He had for a long time been an associate of the white men, particularly in their wars, and having been, at the season when his services were of importance, much noticed and flattered, he had turned Christian and was baptized by the name of John. He had suffered severely in his family during the recent war, having had every soul to whom he was allied cut off by an inroad of the enemy; and when the last lingering remnant of his nation extinguished their fires, among the hills of the Delaware, he alone had remained, with a determination of laying his bones in that country where his fathers had so long lived and governed.

It was only, however, within a few months, that he had appeared among the mountains that surrounded Templeton. To the hut of the old hunter he seemed peculiarly welcome; and, as the habits of the Leather-Stocking were so nearly assimilated to those of the savages, the conjunction of their interests excited no surprise. They resided in the same cabin, ate of the same food, and were chiefly occupied in the same pursuits.

We have already mentioned the baptismal name of this ancient chief; but in his conversation with Natty, held in the language of the Delawares, he was heard uniformly to call himself Chingachgook, which, interpreted, means the "Great Snake." This name he had acquired in his youth, by his skill and prowess in war; but when his brows began to wrinkle with time, and he stood alone, the last of his family, and his particular tribe, the few Delawares, who yet continued about the head-waters of their river, gave him the mournful appellation of Mohegan. Perhaps there was something of deep feeling excited in the bosom of this inhabitant of the forest by the sound of a name that recalled the idea of his nation in ruins, for he seldom used it himself—never, indeed, excepting on the most solemn occasions; but the settlers had united, according to the Christian custom, his baptismal with his national name, and to them he was generally known as John Mohegan, or, more familiarly, as Indian John.

From his long association with the white men, the habits of Mohegan were a mixture of the civilized and savage states, though there

was certainly a strong preponderance in favor of the latter. In common with all his people, who dwelt within the influence of the Anglo-Americans, he had acquired new wants, and his dress was a mixture of his native and European fashions. Notwithstanding the intense cold without, his head was uncovered; but a profusion of long, black, coarse hair concealed his forehead, his crown, and even hung about his cheeks, so as to convey the idea, to one who knew his present amid former conditions, that he encouraged its abundance, as a willing veil to hide the shame of a noble soul, mourning for glory once known. His forehead, when it could be seen, appeared lofty, broad, and noble. His nose was high, and of the kind called Roman, with nostrils that expanded, in his seventieth year, with the freedom that had distinguished them in youth. His mouth was large, but compressed, and possessing a great share of expression and character, and, when opened, it discovered a perfect set of short, strong, and regular teeth. His chin was full, though not prominent; and his face bore the infallible mark of his people, in its square, high cheek-bones. The eyes were not large, but their black orbs glittered in the rays of the candles, as he gazed intently down the hall, like two balls of fire.

The instant that Mohegan observed himself to be noticed by the group around the young stranger, he dropped the blanket which covered the upper part of his frame, from his shoulders, suffering it to fall over his leggings of untanned deer-skin, where it was retained by a belt of bark that confined it to his waist.

As he walked slowly down the long hail, the dignified and deliberate tread of the Indian surprised the spectators.

His shoulders, and body to his waist, were entirely bare, with the exception of a silver medallion of Washington, that was suspended from his neck by a thong of buckskin, and rested on his high chest, amid many scars. His shoulders were rather broad and full; but the arms, though straight and graceful, wanted the muscular appearance that labor gives to a race of men. The medallion was the only ornament he wore, although enormous slits in the rim of either ear, which suffered the cartilages to fall two inches below the members, had evidently been used for the purposes of decoration in other days in his hand he held a small basket of the ash-wood slips, colored in divers fantastical conceits, with red and black paints mingled with the white of the wood.

As this child of the forest approached them, the whole party stood aside, and allowed him to confront the object of his visit. He did not speak, however, but stood fixing his glowing eyes on the shoulder of the young hunter, and then turning them intently on the countenance of the Judge. The latter was a good deal astonished at this unusual departure from the ordinarily subdued and quiet manner of the Indian; but he extended his hand, and said:

"Thou art welcome, John. This youth entertains a high opinion of thy skill, it seems, for he prefers thee to dress his wound even to our good friend, Dr. Todd."

Mohegan now spoke in tolerable English, but in a low, monotonous, guttural tone;

"The children of Miquon do not love the sight of blood; and yet the Young Eagle has been struck by the hand that should do no evil!"

"Mohegan! old John!" exclaimed the Judge, "thinkest thou that my hand has ever drawn human blood willingly? For shame! for shame, old John! thy religion should have taught thee better."

"The evil spirit sometimes lives in the best heart," returned John, "but my brother speaks the truth; his hand has never taken life, when awake; no! not even when the children of the great English Father were making the waters red with the blood of his people."

"Surely John," said Mr. Grant, with much earnestness, "you remember the divine command of our Saviour, 'Judge not, lest ye be judged.' What motive could Judge Temple have for injuring a youth like this; one to whom he is unknown, and from whom he can receive neither in jury nor favor?"

John listened respectfully to the divine, and, when he had concluded, he stretched out his arm, and said with energy:

"He is innocent. My brother has not done this."

Marmaduke received the offered hand of the other with a smile, that showed, however he might be astonished at his suspicion, he had ceased to resent it; while the wounded youth stood, gazing from his red friend to his host, with interest powerfully delineated in his countenance.

No sooner was this act of pacification exchanged, than John proceeded to discharge the duty on which he had come. Dr. Todd was far from manifesting any displeasure at this invasion of his rights, but made way for the new leech with an air that expressed a willingness to gratify the humors of his patient, now that the all-important part of the business was so successfully performed, and nothing remained to be done but what any child might effect, indeed, he whispered as much to Monsieur Le Quoi, when he said:

"It was fortunate that the ball was extracted before this Indian came in; but any old woman can dress the wound. The young man, I hear, lives with John and Natty Bumpo, and it's always best to humor a patient, when it can be done discreetly—I say, discreetly, monsieur."

"Certainement," returned the Frenchman; "you seem ver happy, Mister Todd, in your practice. I tink the elder lady might ver well finish vat you so skeelfully begin."

But Richard had, at the bottom, a great deal of veneration for the knowledge of Mohegan, especially in external wounds; and, retaining all his desire for a participation in glory, he advanced nigh the Indian, and said: "Sago, sago, Mohegan! sago my good fellow I am glad you have come; give me a regular physician, like Dr. Todd to cut into flesh, and a native to heal the wound. Do you remember, John, the time when I and you set the bone of Natty Bumpo's little finger, after he broke it by falling from the rock, when he was trying to get the partridge that fell on the cliffs? I never could tell yet whether it was I or Natty who killed that bird: he fired first, and the bird stooped, and then it was rising again as I pulled trigger. I should have claimed it for a certainty, but Natty said the hole was too big for shot, and he fired a single ball from his rifle; but the piece I carried then didn't scatter, and I have known it to bore a hole through a board, when I've been shooting at a mark, very much like rifle bullets. Shall I help you, John? You know I have a knack at these things."

Mohegan heard this disquisition quite patiently, and, when Richard concluded, he held out the basket which contained his specifics,

indicating, by a gesture, that he might hold it. Mr. Jones was quite satisfied with this commission; and ever after, in speaking of the event, was used to say that "Dr. Todd and I cut out the bullet, and I and Indian John dressed the wound."

The patient was much more deserving of that epithet while under the hands of Mohegan, than while suffering under the practice of the physician. Indeed, the Indian gave him but little opportunity for the exercise of a forbearing temper, as he had come prepared for the occasion. His dressings were soon applied, and consisted only of some pounded bark, moistened with a fluid that he had expressed from some of the simples of the woods.

Among the native tribes of the forest there were always two kinds of leeches to be met with. The one placed its whole dependence on the exercise of a supernatural power, and was held in greater veneration than their practice could at all justify; but the other was really endowed with great skill in the ordinary complaints of the human body, and was more particularly, as Natty had intimated, "curous" in cuts and bruises.

While John and Richard were placing the dressings on the wound, Elnathan was acutely eyeing the contents of Mohegan's basket, which Mr. Jones, in his physical ardor had transferred to the doctor, in order to hold himself one end of the bandages. Here he was soon enabled to detect sundry fragments of wood and bark, of which he quite coolly took possession, very possibly without any intention of speaking at all upon the subject; but, when he beheld the full blue eye of Marmaduke watching his movements, he whispered to the Judge:

"It is not to be denied, Judge Temple, but what the savages are knowing in small matters of physic. They hand these things down in their traditions. Now in cancers and hydrophobia they are quite ingenious. I will just take this bark home and analyze it; for, though it can't be worth sixpence to the young man's shoulder, it may be good for the toothache, or rheumatism, or some of them complaints. A man should never be above learning, even if it be from an Indian."

It was fortunate for Dr. Todd that his principles were so liberal, as, coupled with his practice, they were the means by which he acquired all his knowledge, and by which he was gradually qualifying himself for the duties of his profession. The process to which he subjected the specific differed, however, greatly from the ordinary rules of chemistry; for instead of separating he afterward united the component parts of Mohegan's remedy, and was thus able to discover the tree whence the Indian had taken it.

Some ten years after this event, when civilization and its refinements had crept, or rather rushed, into the settlements among these wild hills, an affair of honor occurred, and Elnathan was seen to apply a salve to the wound received by one of the parties, which had the flavor that was peculiar to the tree, or root, that Mohegan had used. Ten years later still, when England and the United States were again engaged in war, and the hordes of the western parts of the State of New York were rushing to the field, Elnathan, presuming on the reputation obtained by these two operations, followed in the rear of a brigade of militia as its surgeon!

When Mohegan had applied the bark, he freely relinquished to Richard the needle and thread that were used in sewing the bandages, for these were implements of which the native but little understood the use: and, step ping back with decent gravity, awaited the completion of the business by the other.

"Reach me the scissors," said Mr. Jones, when he had finished, and finished for the second time, after tying the linen in every shape and form that it could be placed; "reach me the scissors, for here is a thread that must be cut off, or it might get under the dressings, and inflame the wound. See, John, I have put the lint I scraped between two layers of the linen; for though the bark is certainly best for the flesh, yet the lint will serve to keep the cold air from the wound. If any lint will do it good, it is this lint; I scraped it myself, and I will not turn my back at scraping lint to any man on the Patent. I ought to know how, if anybody ought, for my grandfather was a doctor, and my father had a natural turn that way."

"Here, squire, is the scissors," said Remarkable, producing from beneath her petticoat of green moreen a pair of dull-looking shears; "well, upon my say-so, you have sewed on the rags as well as a woman."

"As well as a woman!" echoed Richard with indignation; "what do women know of such matters? and you are proof of the truth of what I say. Who ever saw such a pair of shears used about a wound? Dr. Todd, I will thank you for the scissors from the case, Now, young man, I think you'll do. The shot has been neatly taken out, although, perhaps, seeing I had a hand in it, I ought not to say so; and the wound is admirably dressed. You will soon be well again; though the jerk you gave my leaders must have a tendency to inflame the shoulder, yet you will do, you will do, You were rather flurried, I sup pose, and not used to horses; but I forgive the accident for the motive; no doubt you had the best of motives; yes, now you will do."

"Then, gentlemen," said the wounded stranger, rising, and resuming his clothes, "it will be unnecessary for me to trespass longer on your time and patience. There remains but one thing more to be settled, and that is, our respective rights to the deer, Judge Temple."

"I acknowledge it to be thine," said Marmaduke; "and much more deeply am I indebted to thee than for this piece of venison. But in the morning thou wilt call here, and we can adjust this, as well as more important matters Elizabeth"—for the young lady, being apprised that the wound was dressed, had re-entered the hall—"thou wilt order a repast for this youth before we proceed to the church; and Aggy will have a sleigh prepared to convey him to his friend."

"But, sir, I cannot go without a part of the deer," returned the youth, seemingly struggling with his own feelings; "I have already told you that I needed the venison for myself."

"Oh, we will not be particular," exclaimed Richard; "the Judge will pay you in the morning for the whole deer; and, Remarkable, give the lad all the animal excepting the saddle; so, on the whole, I think you may consider yourself as a very lucky young man—you have been shot without being disabled; have had the wound dressed in the best possible manner here in the woods, as well as it would have been done in the Philadelphia hospital, if not better; have sold your deer at a high price, and yet can keep most of the carcass, with the skin in the bargain. Marky, tell Tom to give him the skin too, and in the morning bring the skin to me and I will give you half a dollar for it, or at least three-and-sixpence. I want just such a skin to cover the pillion that I am making for Cousin Bess."

"I thank you, sir, for your liberality, and, I trust, am also thankful for my escape," returned the stranger; "but you reserve the very part of the animal that I wished for my own use. I must have the saddle myself."

"Must!" echoed Richard; "must is harder to be swallowed than the horns of the buck."

"Yes, must," repeated the youth; when, turning his head proudly around him, as if to see who would dare to controvert his rights, he met the astonished gaze of Elizabeth, and proceeded more mildly: "That is, if a man is allowed the possession of that which his hand hath killed, and the law will protect him in the enjoyment of his own."

"The law will do so," said Judge Temple, with an air of mortification mingled with surprise. "Benjamin, see that the whole deer is placed in the sleigh; and have this youth conveyed to the hut of Leather Stocking. But, young man thou hast a name, and I shall see you again, in order to compensate thee for the wrong I have done thee?"

"I am called Edwards," returned the hunter; "Oliver Edwards, I am easily to be seen, sir, for I live nigh by, and am not afraid to show my face, having never injured any man."

"It is we who have injured you, sir," said Elizabeth; "and the knowledge that you decline our assistance would give my father great pain. He would gladly see you in the morning."

The young hunter gazed at the fair speaker until his earnest look brought the blood to her temples; when, recollecting himself, he bent his head, dropping his eyes to the carpet, and replied:

"In the morning, then, will I return, and see Judge Temple; and I will accept his offer of the sleigh in token of amity."

"Amity!" repeated Marmaduke; "there was no malice in the act that injured thee, young man; there should be none in the feelings which it may engender."

"Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," observed Mr. Grant, "is the language used by our Divine Master himself, and it should be the golden rule with us, his humble followers."

The stranger stood a moment lost in thought, and then, glancing his dark eyes rather wildly around the hall, he bowed low to the divine, and moved from the apartment with an air that would not admit of detention.

"'Tis strange that one so young should harbor such feelings of resentment," said Marmaduke, when the door closed behind the stranger; "but while the pain is recent, and the sense of the injury so fresh, he must feel more strongly than in cooler moments. I doubt not we shall see him in the morning more tractable."

Elizabeth, to whom this speech was addressed, did not reply, but moved slowly up the hall by herself, fixing her eyes on the little figure of the English ingrain carpet that covered the floor; while, on the other hand, Richard gave a loud crack with his whip, as the stranger disappeared, and cried:

"Well, 'Duke, you are your own master, but I would have tried law for the saddle before I would have given it to the fellow. Do you not own the mountains as well as the valleys? are not the woods your own? what right has this chap, or the Leather-Stocking, to shoot in your woods without your permission? Now, I have known a farmer in Pennsylvania order a sportsman off his farm with as little ceremony as I would order Benjamin to put a log in the stove—By-the-bye, Benjamin, see how the thermometer stands.—Now, if a man has a right to do this on a farm of a hundred acres, what power must a landlord have who owns sixty thousand—ay, for the matter of that, including the late purchases, a hundred thousand? There is Mohegan, to be sure, he may have some right, being a native; but it's little the poor fellow can do now with his rifle. How is this managed in France, Monsieur Le Quoi? Do you let everybody run over your land in that country helter-skelter, as they do here, shooting the game, so that a gentleman has but little or no chance with his gun?"

"Bah! diable, no, Meester Deeck," replied the Frenchman; "we give, in France, no liberty except to the ladi."

"Yes, yes, to the women, I know," said Richard, "that is your Salic law. I read, sir, all kinds of books; of France, as well as England; of Greece, as well as Rome. But if I were in 'Duke's place, I would stick up advertisements to-morrow morning, forbidding all persons to shoot, or trespass in any manner, on my woods. I could write such an advertisement myself, in an hour, as would put a stop to the thing at once."

"Richart," said Major Hartmann, very coolly knocking the ashes from his pipe into the spitting-box by his side, "now listen; I have livet seventy-five years on ter Mohawk, and in ter woots. You had better mettle as mit ter deyvel, as mit ter hunters, Tey live mit ter gun, and a rifle is better as ter law."

"Ain't Marmaduke a judge?" said Richard indignantly. "Where is the use of being a judge, or having a judge, if there is no law? Damn the fellow! I have a great mind to sue him in the morning myself, before Squire Doolittle, for meddling with my leaders. I am not afraid of his rifle. I can shoot, too. I have hit a dollar many a time at fifty rods."

"Thou hast missed more dollars than ever thou hast hit, Dickon," exclaimed the cheerful voice of the Judge. "But we will now take our evening's repast, which I perseive, by Remarkable's physiognomy, is ready. Monsieur Le Quoi, Miss Temple has a hand at your service. Will you lead the way, my child?"

"Ah! ma chere mam'selle, comme je suis enchante!" said the Frenchman. "Il ne manque que les dames de faire un paradis de Templeton."

Mr. Grant and Mohegan continued in the hall, while the remainder of the party withdrew to an eating parlor, if we except Benjamin, who civilly remained to close the rear after the clergyman and to open the front door for the exit of the Indian.

"John," said the divine, when the figure of Judge Temple disappeared, the last of the group, "to-morrow is the festival of the nativity of our blessed Redeemer, when the church has appointed prayers and thanksgivings to be offered up by her children, and when all are invited to partake of the mystical elements. As you have taken up the cross, and become a follower of good and an eschewer of evil, I trust I shall see you before the altar, with a contrite heart and a meek spirit."

"John will come," said the Indian, betraying no surprise; though he did not understand all the terms used by the other.

"Yes," continued Mr. Grant, laying his hand gently on the tawny shoulder of the aged chief, "but it is not enough to be there in the



body; you must come in the spirit and in truth. The Redeemer died for all, for the poor Indian as well as for the white man. Heaven knows no difference in color; nor must earth witness a separation of the church. It is good and profitable, John, to freshen the understanding, and support the wavering, by the observance of our holy festivals; but all form is but stench in the nostrils of the Holy One, unless it be accompanied by a devout and humble spirit.”

The Indian stepped back a little, and, raising his body to its utmost powers of erection, he stretched his right arm on high, and dropped his forefinger downward, as if pointing from the heavens; then, striking his other hand on his naked breast, he said, with energy:

“The eye of the Great Spirit can see from the clouds—the bosom of Mohegan is bare!”

“It is well, John, and I hope you will receive profit and consolation from the performance of this duty. The Great Spirit overlooks none of his children; and the man of the woods is as much an object of his care as he who dwells in a palace. I wish you a good-night, and pray God to bless you.”

The Indian bent his head, and they separated—the one to seek his hut, and the other to join his party at the supper-table. While Benjamin was opening the door for the passage of the chief, he cried, in a tone that was meant to be encouraging:

“The parson says the word that is true, John. If so be that they took count of the color of the skin in heaven, why, they might refuse to muster on their books a Christian-born, like myself, just for the matter of a little tan, from cruising in warm latitudes; though, for the matter of that, this damned norwester is enough to whiten the skin of a blackamore. Let the reef out of your blanket, man, or your red hide will hardly weather the night with out a touch from the frost.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

"For here the exile met from every clime,  
And spoke, in friendship, every distant tongue."  
—Campbell.

We have made our readers acquainted with some variety in character and nations, in introducing the most important personages of this legend to their notice; but, in order to establish the fidelity of our narrative, we shall briefly attempt to explain the reason why we have been obliged to present so motley a *dramatis personae*.

Europe, at the period of our tale, was in the commencement of that commotion which afterward shook her political institutions to the centre. Louis the Sixteenth had been beheaded, and a nation once esteemed the most refined among the civilized people of the world was changing its character, and substituting cruelty for mercy, and subtlety and ferocity for magnanimity and courage. Thou sands of Frenchmen were compelled to seek protection in distant lands. Among the crowds who fled from France and her islands, to the United States of America, was the gentleman whom we have already mentioned as Monsieur Le Quoi. He had been recommended to the favor of Judge Temple by the head of an eminent mercantile house in New York, with whom Marmaduke was in habits of intimacy, and accustomed to exchange good offices. At his first interview with the Frenchman, our Judge had discovered him to be a man of breeding, and one who had seen much more prosperous days in his own country. From certain hints that had escaped him, Monsieur Le Quoi was suspected of having been a West-India planter, great numbers of whom had fled from St. Domingo and the other islands, and were now living in the Union, in a state of comparative poverty, and some in absolute want. The latter was not, however, the lot of Monsieur Le Quoi. He had but little, he acknowledged; but that little was enough to furnish, in the language of the country, an assortment for a store.

The knowledge of Marmaduke was eminently practical, and there was no part of a settler's life with which he was not familiar. Under his direction, Monsieur Le Quoi made some purchases, consisting of a few cloths; some groceries, with a good deal of gunpowder and tobacco; a quantity of iron-ware, among which was a large proportion of Barlow's jack-knives, potash-kettles, and spiders; a very formidable collection of crockery of the coarsest quality and most uncouth forms; together with every other common article that the art of man has devised for his wants, not forgetting the luxuries of looking-glasses and Jew's-harps. With this collection of valuables, Monsieur Le Quoi had stepped behind a counter, and, with a wonderful pliability of temperament, had dropped into his assumed character as gracefully as he had ever moved in any other. The gentleness and suavity of his manners rendered him extremely popular; besides this, the women soon discovered that he had taste. His calicoes were the finest, or, in other words, the most showy, of any that were brought into the country, and it was impossible to look at the prices asked for his goods by "so pretty a spoken man." Through these conjoint means, the affairs of Monsieur Le Quoi were again in a prosperous condition, and he was looked up to by the settlers as the second best man on the "Patent." \*

\* The term "Patent" which we have already used, and for which we may have further occasion, meant the district of country that had been originally granted to old Major Effingham by the "king's letters patent," and which had now become, by purchase under the act of confiscation, the property of Marmaduke Temple. It was a term in common use throughout the new parts of the State; and was usually annexed to the landlord's name, as "Temple's or Effingham's Patent."

Major Hartmann was a descendant of a man who, in company with a number of his countrymen, had emigrated with their families from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Mohawk. This migration had occurred as far back as the reign of Queen Anne; and their descendants were now living, in great peace and plenty, on the fertile borders of that beautiful stream.

The Germans, or "High Dutchers," as they were called, to distinguish them from the original or Low Dutch colonists, were a very peculiar people. They possessed all the gravity of the latter, without any of their phlegm; and like them, the "High Dutchers" were industrious, honest, and economical, Fritz, or Frederick Hartmann, was an epitome of all the vices and virtues, foibles and excellences, of his race. He was passionate though silent, obstinate, and a good deal suspicious of strangers; of immovable courage, in flexible honesty, and undeviating in his friendships. In deed there was no change about him, unless it were from grave to gay. He was serious by months, and jolly by weeks. He had, early in their acquaintance, formed an attachment for Marmaduke Temple, who was the only man that could not speak High Dutch that ever gained his entire confidence. Four times in each year, at periods equidistant, he left his low stone dwelling on the banks of the Mohawk, and travelled thirty miles, through the hills, to the door of the mansion-house in Templeton. Here he generally stayed a week; and was reputed to spend much of that time in riotous living, greatly countenanced by Mr. Richard Jones. But every one loved him, even to Remarkable Pettibone, to whom he occasioned some additional trouble, he was so frank, so sincere, and, at times, so mirthful. He was now on his regular Christmas visit, and had not been in the village an hour when Richard summoned him to fill a seat in the sleigh to meet the landlord and his daughter.

Before explaining the character and situation of Mr. Grant, it will be necessary to recur to times far back in the brief history of the settlement.

There seems to be a tendency in human nature to endeavor to provide for the wants of this world, before our attention is turned to the business of the other. Religion was a quality but little cultivated amid the stumps of Temple's Patent for the first few years of its settlement; but, as most of its inhabitants were from the moral States of Connecticut and Massachusetts, when the wants of nature were satisfied they began seriously to turn their attention to the introduction of those customs and observances which had been the principal care of their fore fathers. There was certainly a great variety of opinions on the subject of grace and free-will among the tenantry of Marmaduke; and, when we take into consideration the variety of the religious instruction which they received, it can easily be seen that

it could not well be otherwise.

Soon after the village had been formally laid out into the streets and blocks that resembled a city, a meeting of its inhabitants had been convened, to take into consideration the propriety of establishing an academy. This measure originated with Richard, who, in truth, was much disposed to have the institution designated a university, or at least a college. Meeting after meeting was held, for this purpose, year after year. The resolutions of these assemblies appeared in the most conspicuous columns of a little blue-looking newspaper, that was already issued weekly from the garret of a dwelling-house in the village, and which the traveller might as often see stuck into the fissure of a stake, erected at the point where the footpath from the log-cabin of some settler entered the highway, as a post-office for an individual. Sometimes the stake supported a small box, and a whole neighborhood received a weekly supply for their literary wants at this point, where the man who "rides post" regularly deposited a bundle of the precious commodity. To these flourishing resolutions, which briefly recounted the general utility of education, the political and geographical rights of the village of Templeton to a participation in the favors of the regents of the university, the salubrity of the air, and wholesomeness of the water, together with the cheapness of food and the superior state of morals in the neighborhood, were uniformly annexed, in large Roman capitals, the names of Marmaduke Temple as chairman and Richard Jones as secretary.

Happily for the success of this undertaking, the regents were not accustomed to resist these appeals to their generosity, whenever there was the smallest prospect of a donation to second the request. Eventually Judge Temple concluded to bestow the necessary land, and to erect the required edifice at his own expense. The skill of Mr., or, as he was now called, from the circumstance of having received the commission of a justice of the peace, Squire Doolittle, was again put in requisition; and the science of Mr. Jones was once more resorted to.

We shall not recount the different devices of the architects on the occasion; nor would it be decorous so to do, seeing that there was a convocation of the society of the ancient and honorable fraternity "of the Free and Accepted Masons," at the head of whom was Richard, in the capacity of master, doubtless to approve or reject such of the plans as, in their wisdom, they deemed to be for the best. The knotty point was, however, soon decided; and, on the appointed day, the brotherhood marched in great state, displaying sundry banners and mysterious symbols, each man with a little mimic apron before him, from a most cunningly contrived apartment in the garret of the "Bold Dragoon," an inn kept by one Captain Hollister, to the site of the intended edifice. Here Richard laid the corner stone, with suitable gravity, amidst an assemblage of more than half the men, and all the women, within ten miles of Templeton.

In the course of the succeeding week there was another meeting of the people, not omitting swarms of the gentler sex, when the abilities of Hiram at the "square rule" were put to the test of experiment. The frame fitted well; and the skeleton of the fabric was reared without a single accident, if we except a few falls from horses while the laborers were returning home in the evening. From this time the work advanced with great rapidity, and in the course of the season the Labor was completed; the edifice Manding, in all its heaty and proportions, the boast of the village, the study of young aspirants for architectural fame, and the admiration of every settler on the Patent.

It was a long, narrow house of wood, painted white, and more than half windows; and, when the observer stood at the western side of the building, the edifice offered but a small obstacle to a full view of the rising sun. It was, in truth, but a very comfortless open place, through which the daylight shone with natural facility. On its front were divers ornaments in wood, designed by Richard and executed by Hiram; but a window in the centre of the second story, immediately over the door or grand entrance, and the "steeple" were the pride of the building. The former was, we believe, of the composite order; for it included in its composition a multitude of ornaments and a great variety of proportions. It consisted of an arched compartment in the centres with a square and small division on either side, the whole incased in heavy frames, deeply and laboriously moulded in pine-wood, and lighted with a vast number of blurred and green-looking glass of those dimensions which are commonly called "eight by ten." Blinds, that were intended to be painted green, kept the window in a state of preservation, and probably might have contributed to the effect of the whole, had not the failure in the public funds, which seems always to be incidental to any undertaking of this kind, left them in the sombre coat of lead-color with which they had been originally clothed. The "steeple" was a little cupola, reared on the very centre of the roof, on four tall pillars of pine that were fluted with a gouge, and loaded with mouldings. On the tops of the columns was reared a dome or cupola, resembling in shape an inverted tea-cup without its bottom, from the centre of which projected a spire, or shaft of wood, transfixed with two iron rods, that bore on their ends the letters N. S. E. and W, in the same metal. The whole was surmounted by an imitation of one of the finny tribe, carved in wood by the hands of Richard, and painted what he called a "scale-color." This animal Mr. Jones affirmed to be an admirable resemblance of a great favorite of the epicures in that country, which bore the title of "lake-fish," and doubtless the assertion was true; for, although intended to answer the purposes of a weathercock, the fish was observed invariably to look with a longing eye in the direction of the beautiful sheet of water that lay imbedded in the mountains of Templeton.

For a short time after the charter of the regents was received, the trustees of this institution employed a graduate of one of the Eastern colleges to instruct such youth as aspired to knowledge within the walls of the edifice which we have described. The upper part of the building was in one apartment, and was intended for gala-days and exhibitions; and the lower contained two rooms that were intended for the great divisions of education, viz., the Latin and the English scholars. The former were never very numerous; though the sounds of "nominative, penname—genitive, penny," were soon heard to issue from the windows of the room, to the great delight and manifest edification of the passenger.

Only one laborer in this temple of Minerva, however, was known to get so far as to attempt a translation of Virgil. He, indeed, appeared at the annual exhibition, to the prodigious exultation of all his relatives, a farmer's family in the vicinity, and repeated the whole of the first eclogue from memory, observing the intonations of the dialogue with much judgment and effect. The sounds, as they proceeded from his mouth, of

"Titty-ree too patty-lee ree-coo-bans sub teg-mi-nee faa-gy  
Syl-ves-trem ten-oo-i moo-sam, med-i-taa-ris, aa-ve-ny."

were the last that had been heard in that building, as probably they were the first that had ever been heard, in the same language, there or anywhere else. By this time the trustees discovered that they had anticipated the age and the instructor, or principal, was superseded by a master, who went on to teach the more humble lesson of "the more haste the worst speed," in good plain English.

From this time until the date of our incidents, the academy was a common country school, and the great room of the building was sometimes used as a court-room, on extraordinary trials; sometimes for conferences of the religious and the morally disposed, in the evening; at others for a ball in the afternoon, given under the auspices of Richard; and on Sundays, invariably, as a place of public worship.

When an itinerant priest of the persuasion of the Methodists, Baptists, Universalists, or of the more numerous sect of the Presbyterians, was accidentally in the neighborhood, he was ordinarily invited to officiate, and was commonly rewarded for his services by a collection in a hat, before the congregation separated. When no such regular minister offered, a kind of colloquial prayer or two was made by some of the more gifted members, and a sermon was usually read, from Sterne, by Mr. Richard Jones.

The consequence of this desultory kind of priesthood was, as we have already intimated, a great diversity of opinion on the more abstruse points of faith. Each sect had its adherents, though neither was regularly organized and disciplined. Of the religious education of Marmaduke we have already written, nor was the doubtful character of his faith completely removed by his marriage. The mother of Elizabeth was an Episcopalian, as indeed, was the mother of the Judge himself; and the good taste of Marmaduke revolted at the familiar colloquies which the leaders of the conferences held with the Deity, in their nightly meetings. In form, he was certainly an Episcopalian, though not a sectary of that denomination. On the other hand, Richard was as rigid in the observance of the canons of his church as he was inflexible in his opinions. Indeed, he had once or twice essayed to introduce the Episcopal form of service, on the Sundays that the pulpit was vacant; but Richard was a good deal addicted to carrying things to an excess, and then there was some thing so papal in his air that the greater part of his hearers deserted him on the second Sabbath—on the third his only auditor was Ben Pump, who had all the obstinate and enlightened orthodoxy of a high churchman.

Before the war of the Revolution, the English Church was supported in the colonies, with much interest, by some of its adherents in the mother country, and a few of the congregations were very amply endowed. But, for the season, after the independence of the States was established, this sect of Christians languished for the want of the highest order of its priesthood. Pious and suitable divines were at length selected, and sent to the mother country, to receive that authority which, it is understood, can only be transmitted directly from one to the other, and thus obtain, in order to reserve, that unity in their churches which properly belonged to a people of the same nation. But unexpected difficulties presented themselves, in the oaths with which the policy of England had fettered their establishment; and much time was spent before a conscientious sense of duty would permit the prelates of Britain to delegate the authority so earnestly sought. Time, patience, and zeal, however, removed every impediment, and the venerable men who had been set apart by the American churches at length returned to their expecting dioceses, endowed with the most elevated functions of their earthly church. Priests and deacons were ordained, and missionaries provided, to keep alive the expiring flame of devotion in such members as were deprived of the ordinary administrations by dwelling in new and unorganized districts.

Of this number was Mr. Grant. He had been sent into the county of which Templeton was the capital, and had been kindly invited by Marmaduke, and officiously pressed by Richard, to take up his abode in the village. A small and humble dwelling was prepared for his family, and the divine had made his appearance in the place but a few days previously to the time of his introduction to the reader. As his forms were entirely new to most of the inhabitants, and a clergyman of another denomination had previously occupied the field, by engaging the academy, the first Sunday after his arrival was allowed to pass in silence; but now that his rival had passed on, like a meteor filling the air with the light of his wisdom, Richard was empowered to give notice that "Public worship, after the forms of the Protestant Episcopal Church, would be held on the night before Christmas, in the long room of the academy in Templeton, by the Rev. Mr. Grant."

This announcement excited great commotion among the different sectaries. Some wondered as to the nature of the exhibition; others sneered; but a far greater part, recollecting the essays of Richard in that way, and mindful of the liberality, or rather laxity, of Marmaduke's notions on the subject of sectarianism, thought it most prudent to be silent.

The expected evening was, however, the wonder of the hour; nor was the curiosity at all diminished when Richard and Benjamin, on the morning of the eventful day, were seen to issue from the woods in the neighborhood of the village, each bearing on his shoulders a large bunch of evergreens. This worthy pair was observed to enter the academy, and carefully to fasten the door, after which their proceedings remained a profound secret to the rest of the village; Mr. Jones, before he commenced this mysterious business, having informed the school-master, to the great delight of the white-headed flock he governed, that there could be no school that day. Marmaduke was apprised of all these preparations by letter, and it was especially arranged that he and Elizabeth should arrive in season to participate in the solemnities of the evening.

After this digression, we shall return to our narrative.

## CHAPTER IX.

"Now all admire, in each high-flavored dish  
The capabilities of flesh-fowl-fish;  
In order due each guest assumes his station,  
Throbs high his breast with fond anticipation,  
And prelibates the joys of mastication."  
—Heliogabalus.

The apartment to which Monsieur Le Quoi handed Elizabeth communicated with the hall, through the door that led under the urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of Dido. The room was spacious, and of very just proportions; but in its ornaments and furniture the same diversity of taste and imperfection of execution were to be observed as existed in the hall. Of furniture, there were a dozen green, wooden arm-chairs, with cushions of moreen, taken from the same piece as the petticoat of Remarkable. The tables were spread, and their materials and workmanship could not be seen; but they were heavy and of great size. An enormous mirror, in a gilt frame, hung against the wall, and a cheerful fire, of the hard or sugar maple, was burning on the hearth. The latter was the first object that struck the attention of the Judge, who on beholding it exclaimed, rather angrily, to Richard:

"How often have I forbidden the use of the sugar maple in my dwelling! The sight of that sap, as it exudes with the heat, is painful to me, Richard. Really, it behooves the owner of woods so extensive as mine, to be cautious what example he sets his people, who are already felling the forests as if no end could be found to their treasures, nor any limits to their extent. If we go on in this way, twenty years hence we shall want fuel."

"Fuel in these hills, Cousin 'Duke!' exclaimed Richard, in derision—"fuel! why, you might as well predict that the fish will die for the want of water in the lake, because I intend, when the frost gets out of the ground, to lead one or two of the spring; through logs, into the village. But you are always a little wild on such subject; Marmaduke."

"Is it wildness," returned the Judge earnestly, "to condemn a practice which devotes these jewels of the forest, these precious gifts of nature, these mines of corn, forest and wealth, to the common uses of a fireplace? But I must, and will, the instant the snow is off the earth, send out a party into the mountains to explore for coal."

"Coal!" echoed Richard. "Who the devil do you think will dig for coal when, in hunting for a bushel he would have to rip up more of trees than would keep him in fuel for a twelvemonth? Poh! poh! Marmaduke: you should leave the management of these things to me, who have a natural turn that way. It was I that ordered this fire, and a noble one it is, to warm the blood of my pretty Cousin Bess."

"The motive, then, must be your apology, Dick," said the Judge.—"But, gentlemen, we are waiting.—Elizabeth, my child, take the head of the table; Richard, I see, means to spare me the trouble of carving, by sitting opposite to you."

"To be sure I do," cried Richard. "Here is a turkey to carve; and I flatter myself that I understand carving a turkey, or, for that matter, a goose, as well as any man alive.—Mr. Grant! Where's Mr. Grant? Will you please to say grace, sir? Everything in getting cold. Take a thing from the fire this cold weather, and it will freeze in five minutes. Mr. Grant, we want you to say grace. 'For what we are about to receive, the Lord make, us thankful Come, sit down, sit down. Do you eat wing or breast, Cousin Bess?'"

But Elizabeth had not taken her seat, nor was she in readiness to receive either the wing or breast. Her Laughing eyes were glancing at the arrangements of the table, and the quality and selection of the food. The eyes of the father soon met the wondering looks of his daughter, and he said, with a smile:

"You perceive, my child, how much we are indebted to Remarkable for her skill in housewifery. She has indeed provided a noble repast—such as well might stop the cravings of hunger."

"Law!" said Remarkable, "I'm glad if the Judge is pleased; but I'm notional that you'll find the sa'ce over done. I thought, as Elizabeth was coming home, that a body could do no less than make things agreeable."

"My daughter has now grown to woman's estate, and is from this moment mistress of my house," said the Judge; "it is proper that all who live with me address her as Miss Temple."

"Do tell!" exclaimed Remarkable, a little aghast; "well, who ever heard of a young woman's being called Miss? If the Judge had a wife now, I shouldn't think of calling her anything but Miss Temple; but—"

"Having nothing but a daughter you will observe that style to her, if you please, in future," interrupted Marmaduke.

As the Judge looked seriously displeased, and, at such moments, carried a particularly commanding air with him, the wary housekeeper made no reply; and, Mr. Grant entering the room, the whole party were seated at the table. As the arrangements of this repast were much in the prevailing taste of that period and country, we shall endeavor to give a short description of the appearance of the banquet.

The table-linen was of the most beautiful damask, and the plates and dishes of real china, an article of great luxury at this early period of American commerce. The knives and forks were of exquisitely polished steel, and were set in unclouded ivory. So much, being furnished by the wealth of Marmaduke, was not only comfortable but even elegant. The contents of the several dishes, and their positions, however, were the result of the sole judgment of Remarkable. Before Elizabeth was placed an enormous roasted turkey, and before Richard one boiled, in the centre of the table stood a pair of heavy silver casters, surrounded by four dishes: one a fricassee that consisted of gray squirrels; another of fish fried; a third of fish boiled; the last was a venison steak. Between these dishes and the turkeys stood, on the one side, a prodigious chine of roasted bear's meat, and on the other a boiled leg of delicious mutton. Interspersed among this load of meats was every species of vegetables that the season and country afforded. The four corners were garnished with plates of cake. On one was piled certain curiously twisted and complicated figures, called "nut-cakes," On another were heaps of a

black-looking sub stance, which, receiving its hue from molasses, was properly termed "sweet-cake;" a wonderful favorite in the coterie of Remarkable. A third was filled, to use the language of the housekeeper, with "cards of gingerbread;" and the last held a "plum-cake," so called from the number of large raisins that were showing their black heads in a substance of suspiciously similar color. At each corner of the table stood saucers, filled with a thick fluid of some what equivocal color and consistence, variegated with small dark lumps of a substance that resembled nothing but itself, which Remarkable termed her "sweetmeats." At the side of each plate, which was placed bottom upward, with its knife and fork most accurately crossed above it, stood another, of smaller size, containing a motley-looking pie, composed of triangular slices of apple, mince, pump kin, cranberry, and custard so arranged as to form an entire whole. Decanters of brandy, rum, gin, and wine, with sundry pitchers of cider, beer, and one hissing vessel of "flip," were put wherever an opening would admit of their introduction. Notwithstanding the size of the tables, there was scarcely a spot where the rich damask could be seen, so crowded were the dishes, with their associated bottles, plates, and saucers. The object seemed to be profusion, and it was obtained entirely at the expense of order and elegance.

All the guests, as well as the Judge himself, seemed perfectly familiar with this description of fare, for each one commenced eating, with an appetite that promised to do great honor to Remarkable's taste and skill. What rendered this attention to the repast a little surprising, was the fact that both the German and Richard had been summoned from another table to meet the Judge; but Major Hartmann both ate and drank without any rule, when on his excursions; and Mr. Jones invariably made it a point to participate in the business in hand, let it be what it would. The host seemed to think some apology necessary for the warmth he had betrayed on the subject of the firewood, and when the party were comfortably seated, and engaged with their knives and forks, he observed:

"The wastefulness of the settlers with the noble trees of this country is shocking, Monsieur Le Quoi, as doubt less you have noticed. I have seen a man fell a pine, when he has been in want of fencing stuff, and roll his first cuts into the gap, where he left it to rot, though its top would have made rails enough to answer his purpose, and its butt would have sold in the Philadelphia market for twenty dollars."

"And how the devil—I beg your pardon, Mr. Grant," interrupted Richard: "but how is the poor devil to get his logs to the Philadelphia market, pray? put them in his pocket, ha! as you would a handful of chestnuts, or a bunch of chicker-berries? I should like to see you walking up High Street, with a pine log in each pocket!—Poh! poh! Cousin 'Duke, there are trees enough for us all, and some to spare. Why, I can hardly tell which way the wind blows, when I'm out in the clearings, they are so thick and so tall; I couldn't at all, if it wasn't for the clouds, and I happen to know all the points of the compass, as it were, by heart."

"Ay! ay! squire," cried Benjamin, who had now entered and taken his place behind the Judge's chair, a little aside withal, in order to be ready for any observation like the present; "look aloft, sir, look aloft. The old seamen say, 'that the devil wouldn't make a sailor, unless he looked aloft' As for the compass, why, there is no such thing as steering without one. I'm sure I never lose sight of the main-top, as I call the squire's lookout on the roof, but I set my compass, d'ye see, and take the bearings and distance of things, in order to work out my course, if so be that it should cloud up, or the tops of the trees should shut out the light of heaven. The steeple of St. Paul's, now that we have got it on end, is a great help to the navigation of the woods, for, by the Lord Harry! as was—"

"It is well, Benjamin," interrupted Marmaduke, observing that his daughter manifested displeasure at the major-domo's familiarity; "but you forget there is a lady in company, and the women love to do most of the talking themselves."

"The Judge says the true word," cried Benjamin, with one of his discordant laughs. "Now here is Mistress Remarkable Pettibones; just take the stopper off her tongue, and you'll hear a gabbling worse like than if you should happen to fall to leeward in crossing a French privateer, or some such thing, mayhap, as a dozen monkeys stowed in one bag."

It were impossible to say how perfect an illustration of the truth of Benjamin's assertion the housekeeper would have furnished, if she had dared; but the Judge looked sternly at her, and unwilling to incur his resentment, yet unable to contain her anger, she threw herself out of the room with a toss of the body that nearly separated her frail form in the centre.

"Richard," said Marmaduke, observing that his displeasure had produced the desired effect, "can you inform me of anything concerning the youth whom I so unfortunately wounded? I found him on the mountain hunting in company with the Leather-Stocking, as if they were of the same family; but there is a manifest difference in their manners. The youth delivers himself in chosen language, such as is seldom heard in these hills, and such as occasions great surprise to me, how one so meanly clad, and following so lowly a pursuit, could attain. Mohegan also knew him. Doubtless he is a tenant of Natty's hut. Did you remark the language of the lad. Monsieur Le Quoi?"

"Certainement, Monsieur Temple," returned the French man, "he deed convairse in de excellent Anglaise."

"The boy is no miracle," exclaimed Richard; "I've known children that were sent to school early, talk much better before they were twelve years old. There was Zared Coe, old Nehemiah's son, who first settled on the beaver-dam meadow, he could write almost as good hand as myself, when he was fourteen; though it's true, I helped to teach him a little in the evenings. But this shooting gentleman ought to be put in the stocks, if he ever takes a rein in his hand again. He is the most awkward fellow about a horse I ever met with. I dare say he never drove anything but oxen in his life."

"There, I think, Dickon, you do the lad injustice," said the Judge; "he uses much discretion in critical moments. Dost thou not think so, Bess?"

There was nothing in this question particularly to excite blushes, but Elizabeth started from the revery into which she had fallen, and colored to her forehead as she answered:

"To me, dear sir, he appeared extremely skilful, and prompt, and courageous; but perhaps Cousin Richard will say I am as ignorant as the gentleman himself."

"Gentleman!" echoed Richard; "do you call such chaps gentlemen, at school, Elizabeth?"

"Every man is a gentleman that knows how to treat a woman with respect and consideration," returned the young lady promptly, and a little smartly.

“So much for hesitating to appear before the heiress in his shirt-sleeves,” cried Richard, winking at Monsieur Le Quoi, who returned the wink with one eye, while he rolled the other, with an expression of sympathy, toward the young lady. “Well, well, to me he seemed anything but a gentleman. I must say, however, for the lad, that he draws a good trigger, and has a true aim. He’s good at shooting a buck, ha! Marmaduke?”

“Richart,” said Major Hartmann, turning his grave countenance toward the gentleman he addressed, with much earnestness, “ter poy is goot. He savet your life, and my life, and ter life of i’ominie Grant, and ter life of ter Frenchman; and, Richard, he shall never vant a pet to sleep in vile olt Fritz Hartmann has a shingle to cover his het mit.”

“Well, well, as you please, old gentleman,” returned Mr. Jones, endeavoring to look indifferent; “put him into your own stone house, if you will, Major. I dare say the lad never slept in anything better than a bark shanty in his life, unless it was some such hut as the cabin of Leather-Stocking. I prophesy you will soon spoil him; any one could see how proud he grew, in a short time, just because he stood by my horses’ heads while I turned them into the highway.”

“No, no, my old friend,” cried Marmaduke, “it shall be my task to provide in some manner for the youth; I owe him a debt of my own, besides the service he has done me through my friends. And yet I anticipate some little trouble in inducing him to accept of my services. He showed a marked dislike, I thought, Bess, to my offer of a residence within these walls for life.”

“Really, dear sir,” said Elizabeth, projecting her beautiful under-lip, “I have not studied the gentleman so closely as to read his feelings in his countenance. I thought he might very naturally feel pain from his wound, and therefore pitied him; but”—and as she spoke she glanced her eye, with suppressed curiosity, toward the major-domo—“I dare say, sir, that Benjamin can tell you something about him, he cannot have been in the village, and Benjamin not have seen him often.”

“Ay! I have seen the boy before,” said Benjamin, who wanted little encouragement to speak; “he has been backing and filling in the wake of Natty Bumpo, through the mountains, after deer, like a Dutch long-boat in tow of an Albany sloop. He carries a good rifle, too, ‘the Leather-Stocking said, in my hearing, before Betty Hollister’s bar-room fire, no later than the Tuesday night, that the younger was certain death to the wild beasts. If so be he can kill the wild-cat that has been heard moaning on the lake-side since the hard frosts and deep snows have driven the deer to herd, he will be doing the thing that is good. Your wild-cat is a bad shipmate, and should be made to cruise out of the track of Christian men.”

“Lives he in the hut of Bumpo?” asked Marmaduke, with some interest.

“Cheek by jowl; the Wednesday will be three weeks since he first hove in sight, in company with Leather-Stocking. They had captured a wolf between them, and had brought in his scalp for the bounty. That Mister Bump-ho has a handy turn with him in taking off a scalp; and there’s them, in this here village, who say he l’arnt the trade by working on Christian men. If so be that there is truth in the saying, and I commanded along shore here, as your honor does, why, d’ye see, I’d bring him to the gangway for it, yet. There’s a very pretty post rigged alongside of the stocks; and for the matter of a cat, I can fit one with my own hands; ay! and use it too, for the want of a better.”

“You are not to credit the idle tales you hear of Natty; he has a kind of natural right to gain a livelihood in these mountains; and if the idlers in the village take it into their heads to annoy him, as they sometimes do reputed rogues, they shall find him protected by the strong arm of the law.”

“Ter rifle is petter as ter law,” said the Major sententiously.

“That for his rifle!” exclaimed Richard, snapping his fingers; “Ben is right, and I—” He was stopped by the sound of a common ship-bell, that had been elevated to the belfry of the academy, which now announced, by its incessant ringing, that the hour for the appointed service had arrived. “For this and every other instance of his goodness—” I beg pardon, Mr. Grant, will you please to return thanks, sir? It is time we should be moving, as we are the only Episcopalians in the neighborhood; that is, I and Benjamin, and Elizabeth; for I count half—breeds, like Marmaduke as bad as heretics.”

The divine arose and performed the office meekly and fervently, and the whole party instantly prepared them selves for the church—or rather academy.

## CHAPTER X.

"And calling sinful man to pray,  
Loud, long, and deep the bell had tolled."  
—Scotts Burgher

While Richard and Monsieur Le Quoi, attended by Benjamin, proceeded to the academy by a foot-path through the snow, the judge, his daughter, the divine, and the Major took a more circuitous route to the same place by the streets of the village.

The moon had risen, and its orb was shedding a flood of light over the dark outline of pines which crowned the eastern mountain. In many climates the sky would have been thought clear and lucid for a noontide. The stars twinkled in the heavens, like the last glimmerings of distant fire, so much were they obscured by the overwhelming radiance of the atmosphere; the rays from the moon striking upon the smooth, white surfaces of the lake and fields, reflecting upward a light that was brightened by the spotless color of the immense bodies of snow which covered the earth.

Elizabeth employed herself with reading the signs, one of which appeared over almost every door; while the sleigh moved steadily, and at an easy gait, along the principal street. Not only new occupations, but names that were strangers to her ears, met her gaze at every step they proceeded. The very houses seemed changed. This had been altered by an addition; that had been painted; another had been erected on the site of an old acquaintance, which had been banished from the earth almost as soon as it made its appearance on it. All were, however, pouring forth their inmates, who uniformly held their way toward the point where the expected exhibition of the conjoint taste of Richard and Benjamin was to be made.

After viewing the buildings, which really appeared to some advantage under the bright but mellow light of the moon, our heroine turned her eyes to a scrutiny of the different figures they passed, in search of any form that she knew. But all seemed alike, as muffled in cloaks, hoods, coats, or tippets, they glided along the narrow passages in the snow which led under the houses, half hid by the bank that had been thrown up in excavating the deep path in which they trod. Once or twice she thought there was a stature or a gait that she recollected; but the person who owned it instantly disappeared behind one of those enormous piles of wood that lay before most of the doors. It was only as they turned from the main street into another that intersected it at right angles, and which led directly to the place of meeting, that she recognized a face and building that she knew.

The house stood at one of the principal corners in the village; and by its well-trodden doorway, as well as the sign that was swinging with a kind of doleful sound in the blasts that occasionally swept down the lake, was clearly one of the most frequented inns in the place. The building was only of one story; but the dormer-windows in the roof, the paint, the window-shutters, and the cheerful fire that shone through the open door, gave it an air of comfort that was not possessed by many of its neighbors. The sign was suspended from a common ale-house post, and represented the figure of a horseman, armed with sabre and pistols, and surmounted by a bear-skin cap, with a fiery animal that he bestrode "rampant." All these particulars were easily to be seen by the aid of the moon, together with a row of somewhat illegible writing in black paint, but in which Elizabeth, to whom the whole was familiar, read with facility, "The Bold Dragoon."

A man and a woman were issuing from the door of this habitation as the sleigh was passing. The former moved with a stiff, military step, that was a good deal heightened by a limp in one leg; but the woman advanced with a measure and an air that seemed not particularly regardful of what she might encounter. The light of the moon fell directly upon her full, broad, and red visage, exhibiting her masculine countenance, under the mockery of a ruffled cap that was intended to soften the lineaments of features that were by no means squeamish. A small bonnet of black silk, and of a slightly formal cut, was placed on the back of her head, but so as not to shade her visage in the least. The face, as it encountered the rays of the moon from the east, seemed not unlike sun rising in the west. She advanced with masculine strides to intercept the sleigh; and the Judge, directing the namesake of the Grecian king, who held the lines, to check his horse, the parties were soon near to each other.

"Good luck to ye, and a welcome home, Jooge," cried the female, with a strong Irish accent; "and I'm sure it's to me that ye're always welcome. Sure! and there's Miss Lizzy, and a fine young woman she is grown. What a heart-ache would she be giving the young men now, if there was sich a thing as a regiment in the town! Och! but it's idle to talk of sich vanities, while the bell is calling us to mateing jist as we shall be called away unexpectedly some day, when we are the laist calkilating. Good-even, Major; will I make the bowl of gin toddy the night, or it's likely ye'll stay at the big house the Christmas eve, and the very night of yer getting there?"

"I am glad to see you, Mrs. Hollister," returned Elizabeth. "I have been trying to find a face that I knew since we left the door of the mansion-house; but none have I seen except your own. Your house, too, is unaltered, while all the others are so changed that, but for the places where they stand, they would be utter strangers. I observe you also keep the dear sign that I saw Cousin Richard paint; and even the name at the bottom, about which, you may remember, you had the disagreement."

"It is the bould dragoon, ye mane? And what name would he have, who niver was known by any other, as my husband here, the captain, can testify? He was a pleasure to wait upon, and was ever the foremost in need. Och! but he had a sudden end! but it's to be hoped that he was justified by the cause, And it's not Parson Grant there who'll gainsay that same. Yes, yes; the squire would paint, and so I thought that we might have his face up there, who had so often shared good and evil wid us. The eyes is no so large nor so fiery as the captain's Own; but the whiskers and the cap is as two paes. Well, well, I'll not keep ye in the cowl, talking, but will drop in the morrow after sarvice, and ask ye how ye do. It's our bounden duty to make the most of this present, and to go to the house which is open to all; so God bless ye, and keep ye from evil! Will I make the gin-twist the night, or no, Major?"

To this question the German replied, very sententiously, in the affirmative; and, after a few words had passed between the husband of the fiery-faced hostess and the Judge, the sleigh moved on. It soon reached the door of the academy, where the party alighted and



entered the building.

In the mean time, Mr. Jones and his two companions, having a much shorter distance to journey, had arrived before the appointed place some minutes sooner than the party in the sleigh. Instead of hastening into the room in order to enjoy the astonishment of the settlers, Richard placed a hand in either pocket of his surcoat, and affected to walk about, in front of the academy, like one to whom the ceremonies were familiar.

The villagers proceeded uniformly into the building, with a decorum and gravity that nothing could move, on such occasions; but with a haste that was probably a little heightened by curiosity. Those who came in from the adjacent country spent some little time in placing certain blue and white blankets over their horses before they proceeded to indulge their desire to view the interior of the house. Most of these men Richard approached, and inquired after the health and condition of their families. The readiness with which he mentioned the names of even the children, showed how very familiarly acquainted he was with their circumstances; and the nature of the answers he received proved that he was a general favorite.

At length one of the pedestrians from the village stopped also, and fixed an earnest gaze at a new brick edifice that was throwing a long shadow across the fields of snow, as it rose, with a beautiful gradation of light and shade, under the rays of a full moon. In front of the academy was a vacant piece of ground, that was intended for a public square. On the side opposite to Mr. Jones, the new and as yet unfinished church of St. Paul's was erected. This edifice had been reared during the preceding summer, by the aid of what was called a subscription; though all, or nearly all, of the money came from the pockets of the landlord. It had been built under a strong conviction of the necessity of a more seemly place of worship than "the long room of the academy," and under an implied agreement that, after its completion, the question should be fairly put to the people, that they might decide to what denomination it should belong. Of course, this expectation kept alive a strong excitement in some few of the sectaries who were interested in its decision; though but little was said openly on the subject. Had Judge Temple espoused the cause of any particular sect, the question would have been immediately put at rest, for his influence was too powerful to be opposed; but he declined interference in the matter, positively refusing to lend even the weight of his name on the side of Richard, who had secretly given an assurance to his diocesan that both the building and the congregation would cheerfully come within the pale of the Protestant Episcopal Church. But, when the neutrality of the Judge was clearly ascertained, Mr. Jones discovered that he had to contend with a stiff-necked people. His first measure was to go among them and commence a course of reasoning, in order to bring them round to his own way of thinking. They all heard him patiently, and not a man uttered a word in reply in the way of argument, and Richard thought, by the time that he had gone through the settlement, the point was conclusively decided in his favor. Willing to strike while the iron was hot, he called a meeting, through the news paper, with a view to decide the question by a vote at once. Not a soul attended; and one of the most anxious afternoons that he had ever known was spent by Richard in a vain discussion with Mrs. Hollister, who strongly contended that the Methodist (her own) church was the best entitled to and most deserving of, the possession of the new tabernacle. Richard now perceived that he had been too sanguine, and had fallen into the error of all those who ignorantly deal with that wary and sagacious people. He assumed a disguise himself—that is, as well as he knew how, and proceeded step by step to advance his purpose.

The task of erecting the building had been unanimously transferred to Mr. Jones and Hiram Doolittle. Together they had built the mansion-house, the academy, and the jail, and they alone knew how to plan and rear such a structure as was now required. Early in the day, these architects had made an equitable division of their duties. To the former was assigned the duty of making all the plans, and to the latter the labor of superintending the execution.

Availing himself of this advantage, Richard silently determined that the windows should have the Roman arch; the first positive step in effecting his wishes. As the building was made of bricks, he was enabled to conceal his design until the moment arrived for placing the frames; then, indeed, it became necessary to act. He communicated his wishes to Hiram with great caution; and, without in the least adverting to the spiritual part of his project, he pressed the point a little warmly on the score of architectural beauty. Hiram heard him patiently, and without contradiction, but still Richard was unable to discover the views of his coadjutor on this interesting subject. As the right to plan was duly delegated to Mr. Jones, no direct objection was made in words, but numberless unexpected difficulties arose in the execution. At first there was a scarcity in the right kind of material necessary to form the frames; but this objection was instantly silenced by Richard running his pencil through two feet of their length at one stroke. Then the expense was mentioned; but Richard reminded Hiram that his cousin paid, and that he was treasurer. This last intimation had great weight, and after a silent and protracted, but fruitless opposition, the work was suffered to proceed on the original plan.

The next difficulty occurred in the steeple, which Richard had modelled after one of the smaller of those spires that adorn the great London cathedral. The imitation was somewhat lame, it was true, the proportions being but in differently observed; but, after much difficulty, Mr. Jones had the satisfaction of seeing an object reared that bore in its outlines, a striking resemblance to a vinegar-cruet. There was less opposition to this model than to the windows; for the settlers were fond of novelty, and their steeple was without a precedent.

Here the labor ceased for the season, and the difficult question of the interior remained for further deliberation. Richard well knew that, when he came to propose a reading-desk and a chancel, he must unmask; for these were arrangements known to no church in the country but his own. Presuming, however, on the advantages he had already obtained, he boldly styled the building St. Paul's, and Hiram prudently acquiesced in this appellation, making, however, the slight addition of calling it "New St. Paul's," feeling less aversion to a name taken from the English cathedral than from the saint.

The pedestrian whom we have already mentioned, as pausing to contemplate this edifice, was no other than the gentleman so frequently named as Mr. or Squire Doolittle. He was of a tall, gaunt formation, with rather sharp features, and a face that expressed formal propriety mingled with low cunning. Richard approached him, followed by Monsieur Le Quoi and the major-domo.

"Good-evening, squire," said Richard, bobbing his head, but without moving his hands from his pockets.

"Good-evening, squire," echoed Hiram, turning his body in order to turn his head also.

"A cold night, Mr. Doolittle, a cold night, sir."

“Coolish; a tedious spell on’t.”

“What, looking at our church, ha! It looks well, by moonlight; how the tin of the cupola glistens! I warrant you the dome of the other St. Paul’s never shines so in the smoke of London.”

“It is a pretty meeting-house to look on,” returned Hiram, “and I believe that Monshure Ler Quow and Mr. Penguilliam will allow it.”

“Sairtainlee!” exclaimed the complaisant Frenchman, “it ees ver fine.”

“I thought the monshure would say so. The last molasses that we had was excellent good. It isn’t likely that you have any more of it on hand?”

“Ah! oui; ees, sair,” returned Monsieur Le Quoi, with a slight shrug of his shoulder, and a trifling grimace, “dere is more. I feel ver happi dat you love eet. I hope dat Madame Doleet’ is in good ’ealth.”

“Why, so as to be stirring,” said Hiram. “The squire hasn’t finished the plans for the inside of the meeting house yet?”

“No—no—no,” returned Richard, speaking quickly, but making a significant pause between each negative—. “it requires reflection. There is a great deal of room to fill up, and I am afraid we shall not know how to dispose of it to advantage. There will be a large vacant spot around the pulpit, which I do not mean to place against the wall, like a sentry-box stuck up on the side of a fort.”

“It is rulable to put the deacons’ box under the pulpit,” said Hiram; and then, as if he had ventured too much, he added, “but there’s different fashions in different Countries.”

“That there is,” cried Benjamin; “now, in running down the coast of Spain and Portingall, you may see a nunnery stuck out on every headland, with more steeples and outriggers such as dog-vanes and weathercocks, than you’ll find aboard of a three-masted schooner. If so be that a well-built church is wanting, old England, after all, is the country to go to after your models and fashion pieces. As to Paul’s, thof I’ve never seen it, being that it’s a long way up town from Radcliffe Highway and the docks, yet everybody knows that it’s the grandest place in the world. Now, I’ve no opinion but this here church over there is as like one end of it as a grampus is to a whale; and that’s only a small difference in bulk. Mounsheer Ler Quaw, here, has been in foreign parts; and thof that is not the same as having been at home, yet he must have seen churches in France too, and can form a small idee of what a church should be; now I ask the mounsheer to his face if it is not a clever little thing, taking it by and large.”

“It ees ver apropos of saircumstance,” said the Frenchman—“ver judgment—but it is in the catholique country dat dey build dc—vat you call—ah a ah-ha—la grande cathédrale—de big church. St. Paul, Londre, is ver fine; ver belle; ver grand—vat you call beeg; but, Monsieur Ben, pardonnez-moi, it is no vort so much as Notre Dame.”

“Ha! mounsheer, what is that you say?” cried Benjamin; “St. Paul’s church is not worth so much as a damn! Mayhap you may be thinking too that the Royal Billy isn’t so good a ship as the Billy de Paris; but she would have licked two of her any day, and in all weathers.”

As Benjamin had assumed a very threatening kind of attitude, flourishing an arm with a bunch at the end of it that was half as big as Monsieur Le Quoi’s head, Richard thought it time to interpose his authority.

“Hush, Benjamin, hush,” he said; “you both misunderstand Monsieur Le Quoi and forget yourself. But here comes Mr. Grant, and the service will commence. Let us go in.”

The Frenchman, who received Benjamin’s reply with a well-bred good-humor that would not admit of any feeling but pity for the other’s ignorance, bowed in acquiescence and followed his companion.

Hiram and the major-domo brought up the rear, the latter grumbling as he entered the building:

“If so be that the king of France had so much as a house to live in that would lay alongside of Paul’s, one might put up with their jaw. It’s more than flesh and blood can bear to hear a Frenchman run down an English church in this manner. Why, Squire Doolittle, I’ve been at the whipping of two of them in one day—clean built, snug frigates with standing royals and them new-fashioned cannonades on their quarters—such as, if they had only Englishmen aboard of them, would have fout the devil.”

With this ominous word in his mouth Benjamin entered the church.

## CHAPTER XI.

"And fools who came to scoff, remained to pray."  
—Goldsmith.

Notwithstanding the united labors of Richard and Benjamin, the "long room" was but an extremely inartificial temple. Benches; made in the coarsest manner, and entirely with a view to usefulness, were arranged in rows for the reception of the Congregation; while a rough, unpainted box was placed against the wall, in the centre of the length of the apartment, as an apology for a pulpit. Something like a reading-desk was in front of this rostrum; and a small mahogany table from the mansion-house, covered with a spotless damask cloth, stood a little on one side, by the way of an altar. Branches of pines and hemlocks were stuck in each of the fissures that offered in the unseasoned and hastily completed woodwork of both the building and its furniture; while festoons and hieroglyphics met the eye in vast profusion along the brown sides of the scratch-coated walls. As the room was only lighted by some ten or fifteen miserable candles, and the windows were without shutters, it would have been but a dreary, cheerless place for the solemnities of a Christmas eve, had not the large fire that was crackling at each end of the apartment given an air of cheerfulness to the scene, by throwing an occasional glare of light through the vistas of bushes and faces.

The two sexes were separated by an area in the centre of the room immediately before the pulpit; amid a few benches lined this space, that were occupied by the principal personages of the village and its vicinity. This distinction was rather a gratuitous concession made by the poorer and less polished part of the population than a right claimed by the favored few. One bench was occupied by the party of Judge Temple, including his daughter, and, with the exception of Dr. Todd, no one else appeared willing to incur the imputation of pride, by taking a seat in what was, literally, the high place of the tabernacle.

Richard filled the chair that was placed behind another table, in the capacity of clerk; while Benjamin, after heaping sundry logs on the fire, posted himself nigh by, in reserve for any movement that might require co-operation.

It would greatly exceed our limits to attempt a description of the congregation, for the dresses were as various as the individuals. Some one article of more than usual finery, and perhaps the relic of other days, was to be seen about most of the females, in connection with the coarse attire of the woods. This wore a faded silk, that had gone through at least three generations, over coarse, woollen black stockings; that, a shawl, whose dyes were as numerous as those of the rainbow, over an awkwardly fitting gown of rough brown "woman's wear." In short, each one exhibited some favorite article, and all appeared in their best, both men and women; while the ground-works in dress, in either sex, were the coarse fabrics manufactured within their own dwellings. One man appeared in the dress of a volunteer company of artillery, of which he had been a member in the "down countries," precisely for no other reason than because it was the best suit he had. Several, particularly of the younger men, displayed pantaloons of blue, edged with red cloth down the seams part of the equipments of the "Templeton Light Infantry," from a little vanity to be seen in "boughten clothes." There was also one man in a "rifle frock," with its fringes and folds of spotless white, striking a chill to the heart with the idea of its coolness, although the thick coat of brown "home-made" that was concealed beneath preserved a proper degree of warmth.

There was a marked uniformity of expression in Countenance, especially in that half of the congregation who did not enjoy the advantages of the polish of the village. A sallow skin, that indicated nothing but exposure, was common to all, as was an air of great decency and attention, mingled, generally, with an expression of shrewdness, and in the present instance of active curiosity. Now and then a face and dress were to be seen among the congregation, that differed entirely from this description. If pock-marked and florid, with gartered legs, and a coat that snugly fitted the person of the wearer, it was surely an English emigrant, who had bent his steps to this retired quarter of the globe. If hard-featured and without color, with high cheek-bones, it was a native of Scotland, in similar circumstances.

The short, black-eyed man, with a cast of the swarthy Spaniard in his face, who rose repeatedly to make room for the belles of the village as they entered, was a son of Erin, who had lately left off his pack, and become a stationary trader in Templeton. In short, half the nations in the north of Europe had their representatives in this assembly, though all had closely assimilated themselves to the Americans in dress and appearance, except the English man. He, indeed, not only adhered to his native customs in attire and living, but usually drove his plough among the stumps in the same manner as he had before done on the plains of Norfolk, until dear-bought experience taught him the useful lesson that a sagacious people knew what was suited to their circumstances better than a casual observer, or a sojourner who was, perhaps, too much prejudiced to compare and, peradventure, too conceited to learn.

Elizabeth soon discovered that she divided the attention of the congregation with Mr. Grant. Timidity, therefore, confined her observation of the appearances which we have described to stoles glances; but, as the stamping of feet was now becoming less frequent, and even the coughing, and other little preliminaries of a congregation settling themselves down into reverential attention, were ceasing, she felt emboldened to look around her. Gradually all noises diminished, until the suppressed cough denoted that it was necessary to avoid singularity, and the most profound stillness pervaded the apartment. The snapping of the fires, as they threw a powerful heat into the room, was alone heard, and each face and every eye were turned on the divine.

At this moment, a heavy stamping of feet was heard in the passage below, as if a new-corner was releasing his limbs from the snow that was necessarily clinging to the legs of a pedestrian. It was succeeded by no audible tread; but directly Mohegan, followed by the Leather-Stocking and the young hunter, made his appearance.

Their footsteps would not have been heard, as they trod the apartment in their moccasins, but for the silence which prevailed.

The Indian moved with great gravity across the floor, and, observing a vacant seat next to the Judge, he took it, in a manner that manifested his sense of his own dignity. Here, drawing his blanket closely around him so as partly to conceal his countenance, he

remained during the service immovable, but deeply attentive. Natty passed the place that was so freely taken by his red companion, and seated himself on one end of a log that was lying near the fire, where he continued, with his rifle standing between his legs, absorbed in reflections seemingly of no very pleasing nature. The youth found a seat among the congregation, and another silence prevailed.

Mr. Grant now arose and commenced his service with the sublime declaration of the Hebrew prophet: "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." The example of Mr. Jones was unnecessary to teach the congregation to rise; the solemnity of the divine effected this as by magic. After a short pause, Mr. Grant proceeded with the solemn and winning exhortation of his service. Nothing was heard but the deep though affectionate tones of the reader, as he went slowly through this exordium; until, something unfortunately striking the mind of Richard as incomplete, he left his place and walked on tiptoe from the room.

When the clergyman bent his knees in prayer and confession, the congregation so far imitated his example as to resume their seats; whence no succeeding effort of the divine, during the evening, was able to remove them in a body. Some rose at times; but by far the larger part continued unbending; observant, it is true, but it was the kind of observation that regarded the ceremony as a spectacle rather than a worship in which they were to participate. Thus deserted by his clerk Mr. Grant continued to read; but no response was audible. The short and solemn pause that succeeded each petition was made; still no voice repeated the eloquent language of the prayer.

The lips of Elizabeth moved, but they moved in vain and accustomed as she was to the service of the churches of the metropolis, she was beginning to feel the awkwardness of the circumstance most painfully when a soft, low female voice repeated after the priest, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Startled at finding one of her own sex in that place who could rise superior to natural timidity, Miss Temple turned her eyes in the direction of the penitent. She observed a young female on her knees, but a short distance from her, with her meek face humbly bent over her book.

The appearance of this stranger, for such she was, entirely, to Elizabeth, was light and fragile. Her dress was neat and becoming; and her countenance, though pale and slightly agitated, excited deep interest by its sweet and melancholy expression. A second and third response was made by this juvenile assistant, when the manly sounds of a male voice proceeded from the opposite part of the room, Miss Temple knew the tones of the young hunter instantly, and struggling to overcome her own diffidence she added her low voice to the number.

All this time Benjamin stood thumbing the leaves of a prayer-book with great industry; but some unexpected difficulties prevented his finding the place. Before the divine reached the close of the confession, however, Richard reappeared at the door, and, as he moved lightly across the room, he took up the response, in a voice that betrayed no other concern than that of not being heard. In his hand he carried a small open box, with the figures "8 by 10" written in black paint on one of its sides; which, having placed in the pulpit, apparently as a footstool for the divine, he returned to his station in time to say, sonorously, "Amen." The eyes of the congregation, very naturally, were turned to the windows, as Mr. Jones entered with his singular load; and then, as if accustomed to his "general agency," were again bent on the priest, in close and curious attention.

The long experience of Mr. Grant admirably qualified him to perform his present duty. He well understood the character of his listeners, who were mostly a primitive people in their habits; and who, being a good deal addicted to subtleties and nice distinctions in their religious opinions, viewed the introduction of any such temporal assistance as form into their spiritual worship not only with jealousy, but frequently with disgust. He had acquired much of his knowledge from studying the great book of human nature as it lay open in the world; and, knowing how dangerous it was to contend with ignorance, uniformly endeavored to avoid dictating where his better reason taught him it was the most prudent to attempt to lead. His orthodoxy had no dependence on his cassock; he could pray with fervor and with faith, if circumstances required it, without the assistance of his clerk; and he had even been known to preach a most evangelical sermon, in the winning manner of native eloquence, without the aid of a cambric handkerchief.

In the present instance he yielded, in many places, to the prejudices of his congregation; and when he had ended, there was not one of his new hearers who did not think the ceremonies less papal and offensive, and more conformant to his or her own notions of devout worship, than they had been led to expect from a service of forms. Richard found in the divine, during the evening, a most powerful co-operator in his religious schemes. In preaching, Mr. Grant endeavored to steer a middle course between the mystical doctrines of those sublimated creeds which daily involve their professors in the most absurd contradictions, and those fluent roles of moral government which would reduce the Saviour to a level with the teacher of a school of ethics. Doctrine it was necessary to preach, for nothing less would have satisfied the disputatious people who were his listeners, and who would have interpreted silence on his part into a tacit acknowledgment of the superficial nature of his creed. We have already said that, among the endless variety of religious instructors, the settlers were accustomed to hear every denomination urge its own distinctive precepts, and to have found one indifferent to this Interesting subject would have been destructive to his influence. But Mr. Grant so happily blended the universally received opinions of the Christian faith with the dogmas of his own church that, although none were entirely exempt from the influence of his reasons, very few took any alarm at the innovation.

"When we consider the great diversity of the human character, influenced as it is by education, by opportunity, and by the physical and moral conditions of the creature, my dear hearers," he earnestly concluded "it can excite no surprise that creeds so very different in their tendencies should grow out of a religion revealed, it is true, but whose revelations are obscured by the lapse of ages, and whose doctrines were, after the fashion of the countries in which they were first promulgated, frequently delivered in parables, and in a language abounding in metaphors and loaded with figures. On points where the learned have, in purity of heart, been compelled to differ, the unlettered will necessarily be at variance. But, happily for us, my brethren, the fountain of divine love flows from a source too pure to admit of pollution in its course; it extends, to those who drink of its vivifying waters, the peace of the righteous, and life everlasting; it endures through all time, and it pervades creation. If there be mystery in its workings, it is the mystery of a Divinity. With a clear knowledge of the nature, the might, and the majesty of God, there might be conviction, but there could be no faith. If we are required to believe in doctrines that seem not in conformity with the deductions of human wisdom, let us never forget that such is the mandate of a wisdom that is infinite. It is sufficient for us that enough is developed to point our path aright, and to direct our

wandering steps to that portal which shall open on the light of an eternal day. Then, indeed, it may be humbly hoped that the film which has been spread by the subtleties of earthly arguments will be dissipated by the spiritual light of Heaven; and that our hour of probation, by the aid of divine grace, being once passed in triumph, will be followed by an eternity of intelligence and endless ages of fruition. All that is now obscure shall become plain to our expanded faculties; and what to our present senses may seem irreconcilable to our limited notions of mercy, of justice, and of love, shall stand irradiated by the light of truth, confessedly the suggestions of Omniscience, and the acts of an All-powerful Benevolence.”

“What a lesson of humility, my brethren, might not each of us obtain from a review of his infant hours, and the recollection of his juvenile passions! How differently do the same acts of parental rigor appear in the eyes of the suffering child and of the chastened man! When the sophist would supplant, with the wild theories of his worldly wisdom, the positive mandates of inspiration, let him remember the expansion of his own feeble intellects, and pause—let him feel the wisdom of God in what is partially concealed as well as that which is revealed; in short, let him substitute humility for pride of reason—let him have faith, and live!”

“The consideration of this subject is full of consolation, my hearers, and does not fail to bring with it lessons of humility and of profit, that, duly improved, would both chasten the heart and strengthen the feeble-minded man in his course. It is a blessed consolation to be able to lay the misdoubtings of our arrogant nature at the thresh old of the dwelling-place of the Deity, from whence they shall be swept away, at the great opening of the portal, like the mists of the morning before the rising sun. It teaches us a lesson of humility, by impressing us with the imperfection of human powers, and by warning us of the many weak points where we are open to the attack of the great enemy of our race; it proves to us that we are in danger of being weak, when our vanity would fain soothe us into the belief that we are most strong; it forcibly points out to us the vainglory of intellect, and shows us the vast difference between a saving faith and the corollaries of a philosophical theology; and it teaches us to reduce our self-examination to the test of good works. By good works must be understood the fruits of repentance, the chiefest of which is charity. Not that charity only which causes us to help the needy and comfort the suffering, but that feeling of universal philanthropy which, by teaching us to love, causes us to judge with lenity all men; striking at the root of self-righteousness, and warning us to be sparing of our condemnation of others, while our own salvation is not yet secure.”

“The lesson of expediency, my brethren, which I would gather from the consideration of this subject, is most strongly inculcated by humility. On the heading and essential points of our faith, there is but little difference among those classes of Christians who acknowledge the attributes of the Saviour, and depend on his mediation. But heresies have polluted every church, and schisms are the fruit of disputation. In order to arrest these dangers, and to insure the union of his followers, it would seem that Christ had established his visible church and delegated the ministry. Wise and holy men, the fathers of our religion, have expended their labors in clearing what was revealed from the obscurities of language, and the results of their experience and researches have been embodied in the form of evangelical discipline. That this discipline must be salutary, is evident from the view of the weakness of human nature that we have already taken; and that it may be profitable to us, and all who listen to its precepts and its liturgy, may God, in his infinite wisdom, grant!—And now to,” etc.

With this ingenious reference to his own forms and ministry, Mr. Grant concluded his discourse. The most profound attention had been paid to the sermon during the whole of its delivery, although the prayers had not been received with so perfect demonstration of respect. This was by no means an intended slight of that liturgy to which the divine alluded, but was the habit of a people who owed their very existence, as a distinct nation, to the doctrinal character of their ancestors. Sundry looks of private dissatisfaction were exchanged between Hiram and one or two of the leading members of the conference, but the feeling went no further at that time; and the congregation, after receiving the blessing of Mr. Grant, dispersed in Silence, and with great decorum.

## CHAPTER XII.

"Your creeds and dogmas of a learned church  
May build a fabric, fair with moral beauty;  
But it would seem that the strong hand of God  
Can, only, 'rase the devil from the heart."  
—Duo.

While the congregation was separating, Mr. Grant approached the place where Elizabeth and her father were seated, leading the youthful female whom we have mentioned in the preceding chapter, and presented her as his daughter. Her reception was as cordial and frank as the manners of the country and the value of good society could render it; the two young women feeling, instantly, that they were necessary to the comfort of each other. The Judge, to whom the clergyman's daughter was also a stranger, was pleased to find one who, from habits, sex, and years, could probably contribute largely to the pleasures of his own child, during her first privations on her removal from the associations of a city to the solitude of Templeton; while Elizabeth, who had been forcibly struck with the sweetness and devotion of the youthful suppliant, removed the slight embarrassment of the timid stranger by the ease of her own manners. They were at once acquainted; and, during the ten minutes that the "academy" was clearing, engagements were made between the young people, not only for the succeeding day, but they would probably have embraced in their arrangements half of the winter, had not the divine interrupted them by saying:

"Gently, gently, my dear Miss Temple, or you will make my girl too dissipated. You forget that she is my housekeeper, and that my domestic affairs must remain unattended to, should Louisa accept of half the kind offers you are so good as to make her."

"And why should they not be neglected entirely, sir?" interrupted Elizabeth. "There are but two of you; and certain I am that my father's house will not only contain you both, but will open its doors spontaneously to receive such guests. Society is a good not to be rejected on account of cold forms, in this wilderness, sir; and I have often heard my father say, that hospitality is not a virtue in a new country, the favor being conferred by the guest."

"The manner in which Judge Temple exercises its rites would confirm this opinion; but we must not trespass too freely. Doubt not that you will see us often, my child, particularly during the frequent visits that I shall be compelled to make to the distant parts of the country. But to obtain an influence with such a people," he continued, glancing his eyes toward the few who were still lingering, curious observers of the interview, "a clergyman must not awaken envy or distrust by dwelling under so splendid a roof as that of Judge Temple."

"You like the roof, then, Mr. Grant," cried Richard, who had been directing the extinguishment of the fires and other little necessary duties, and who approached in time to hear the close of the divine's speech. "I am glad to find one man of taste at last. Here's 'Duke now, pretends to call it by every abusive name he can invent; but though 'Duke is a tolerable judge, he is a very poor carpenter, let me tell him. Well, sir, well, I think we may say, without boasting, that the service was as well performed this evening as you often see; I think, quite as well as I ever knew it to be done in old Trinity—that is, if we except the organ. But there is the school-master leads the psalm with a very good air. I used to lead myself, but latterly I have sung nothing but bass. There is a good deal of science to be shown in the bass, and it affords a fine opportunity to show off a full, deep voice. Benjamin, too, sings a good bass, though he is often out in the words. Did you ever hear Benjamin sing the 'Bay of Biscay,'?"

"I believe he gave us part of it this evening," said Marmaduke, laughing. "There was, now and then, a fearful quaver in his voice, and it seems that Mr. Penguillian is like most others who do one thing particularly well; he knows nothing else. He has, certainly, a wonderful partiality to one tune, and he has a prodigious self-confidence in that one, for he delivers himself like a northwester sweeping across the lake. But come, gentlemen, our way is clear, and the sleigh waits. Good-evening, Mr. Grant. Good-night, young lady—remember you dine beneath the Corinthian roof, to-morrow, with Elizabeth."

The parties separated, Richard holding a close dissertation with Mr. Le Quoi, as they descended the stairs, on the subject of psalmody, which he closed by a violent eulogium on the air of the "Bay of Biscay, O," as particularly connected with his friend Benjamin's execution.

During the preceding dialogue, Mohegan retained his seat, with his head shrouded in his blanket, as seemingly inattentive to surrounding objects as the departing congregation was itself to the presence of the aged chief, Natty, also, continued on the log where he had first placed himself, with his head resting on one of his hands, while the other held the rifle, which was thrown carelessly across his lap. His countenance expressed uneasiness, and the occasional unquiet glances that he had thrown around him during the service plainly indicated some unusual causes for unhappiness. His continuing seated was, however, out of respect to the Indian chief to whom he paid the utmost deference on all occasions, although it was mingled with the rough manner of a hunter.

The young companion of these two ancient inhabitants of the forest remained also standing before the extinguished brands, probably from an unwillingness to depart without his comrades. The room was now deserted by all but this group, the divine, and his daughter. As the party from the mansion-house disappeared, John arose, and, dropping the blanket from his head, he shook back the mass of black hair from his face, and, approaching Mr. Grant, he extended his hand, and said solemnly:

"Father, I thank you. The words that have been said, since the rising moon, have gone upward, and the Great Spirit is glad. What you have told your children, they will remember, and be good." He paused a moment, and then, elevating himself with the grandeur of an Indian chief, he added: "If Chingachgook lives to travel toward the setting sun, after his tribe, and the Great Spirit carries him over the lakes and mountains with the breath of his body, he will tell his people the good talk he has heard; and they will believe him; for who can say that Mohegan has ever lied?"

"Let him place his dependence on the goodness of Divine mercy," said Mr. Grant, to whom the proud consciousness of the Indian sounded a little heterodox, "and it never will desert him. When the heart is filled with love to God, there is no room for sin. But, young man, to you I owe not only an obligation, in common with those you saved this evening on the mountain, but my thanks for your respectable and pious manner in assisting in the service at a most embarrassing moment. I should be happy to see you sometimes at my dwelling, when, perhaps, my conversation may strengthen you in the path which you appear to have chosen. It is so unusual to find one of your age and appearance, in these woods, at all acquainted with our holy liturgy, that it lessens at once the distance between us, and I feel that we are no longer strangers. You seem quite at home in the service; I did not perceive that you had even a book, although good Mr. Jones, had laid several in different parts of the room."

"It would be strange if I were ignorant of the service of our church, sir," returned the youth modestly; "for I was baptized in its communion and I have never yet attended public worship elsewhere. For me to use the forms of any other denomination would be as singular as our own have proved to the people here this evening."

"You give me great pleasure, my dear sir," cried the divine, seizing the other by the hand, and shaking it cordially. "You will go home with me now—indeed you must—my child has yet to thank you for saving my life. I will listen to no apologies. This worthy Indian, and your friend, there, will accompany us. Bless me! to think that' he has arrived at manhood in this country, without entering a dissenting \* meeting-house!"

\* The divines of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States commonly call other denominations Dissenters, though there never was an established church in their own country!

"No, no," interrupted the Leather-Stocking, "I must away to the wigwam; there's work there that mustn't be forgotten for all your churchings and merry-makings. Let the lad go with you in welcome; he is used to keeping company with ministers, and talking of such matters; so is old John, who was christianized by the Moravians abouts the time of the old war. But I am a plain unlearned man, that has sarved both the king and his country, in his day, agin' the French and savages, but never so much as looked into a book, or larnt a letter of scholarship, in my born days. I've never seen the use of much in-door work, though I have lived to be partly bald, and in my time have killed two hundred beaver in a season, and that without counting the other game. If you mistrust what I am telling you, you can ask Chingachgook there, for I did it in the heart of the Delaware country, and the old man is knowing to the truth of every word I say."

"I doubt not, my friend, that you have been both a valiant soldier and skilful hunter in your day," said the divine; "but more is wanting to prepare you for that end which approaches. You may have heard the maxim, that 'young men may die, but that old men must'."

"I'm sure I never was so great a fool as to expect to live forever," said Natty, giving one of his silent laughs; "no man need do that who trails the savages through the woods, as I have done, and lives, for the hot months, on the lake streams. I've a strong constitution, I must say that for myself, as is plain to be seen; for I've drunk the Onondaga water a hundred times, while I've been watching the deer-licks, when the fever-an'-agy seeds was to be seen in it as plain and as plenty as you can see the rattle snakes on old Crumhorn. But then I never expected to hold out forever; though there's them living who have seen the German flats a wilderness; ay! and them that's larned, and acquainted with religion, too; though you might look a week, now, and not find even the stump of a pine on them; and that's a wood that lasts in the ground the better part of a hundred years after the tree is dead."

"This is but time, my good friend," returned Mr. Grant, who began to take an interest in the welfare of his new acquaintance, "but I would have you prepare for eternity. It is incumbent on you to attend places of public worship, as I am pleased to see that you have done this evening. Would it not be heedless in you to start on a day's toil of hard hunting, and leave your ramrod and flint behind?"

"It must be a young hand in the woods," interrupted Natty, with another laugh, "that didn't know how to dress a rod out of an ash sapling or find a fire-stone in the mountains. No, no, I never expected to live forever; but I see, times be altering in these mountains from what they was thirty years ago, or, for that matter, ten years. But might makes right, and the law is stronger than an old man, whether he is one that has much laming, or only like me, that is better now at standing at the passes than in following the hounds, as I once used to could. Heigh-ho! I never know'd preaching come into a settlement but it made game scarce, and raised the price of gunpowder; and that's a thing that's not as easily made as a ramrod or an Indian flint."

The divine, perceiving that he had given his opponent an argument by his own unfortunate selection of a comparison, very prudently relinquished the controversy; although he was fully determined to resume it at a more happy moment. Repeating his request to the young hunter with great earnestness, the youth and Indian consented to accompany him and his daughter to the dwelling that the care of Mr. Jones had provided for their temporary residence. Leather-Stocking persevered in his intention of returning to the hut, and at the door of the building they separated.

After following the course of one of the streets of the village a short distance. Mr. Grant, who led the way, turned into a field, through a pair of open bars, and entered a footpath, of but sufficient width to admit one person to walk in at a time. The moon had gained a height that enabled her to throw her rays perpendicularly on the valley; and the distinct shadows of the party flitted along on the banks of the silver snow, like the presence of aerial figures, gliding to their appointed place of meeting. The night still continued intensely cold, although not a breath of wind was felt. The path was beaten so hard that the gentle female, who made one of the party, moved with ease along its windings; though the frost emitted a low creaking at the impression of even her light footsteps.

The clergyman in his dark dress of broadcloth, with his mild, benevolent countenance occasionally turned toward his companions, expressing that look of subdued care which was its characteristic, presented the first object in this singular group. Next to him moved the Indian, his hair falling about his face, his head uncovered, and the rest of his form concealed beneath his blanket. As his swarthy visage, with its muscles fixed in rigid composure, was seen under the light of the moon, which struck his face obliquely, he seemed a picture of resigned old age, on whom the storms of winter had beaten in vain for the greater part of a century; but when, in turning his head, the rays fell directly on his dark, fiery eyes, they told a tale of passions unrestrained, and of thoughts free as air. The slight person of Miss Grant, which followed next, and which was but too thinly clad for the severity of the season, formed a marked contrast to the wild attire and uneasy glances of the Delaware chief; and more than once during their walk, the young hunter, himself no insignificant

figure in the group, was led to consider the difference in the human form, as the face of Mohegan and the gentle countenance of Miss Grant, with eyes that rivalled the soft hue of the sky, met his view at the instant that each turned to throw a glance at the splendid orb which lighted their path. Their way, which led through fields that lay at some distance in the rear of the houses, was cheered by a conversation that flagged or became animated with the subject. The first to speak was the divine.

"Really," he said, "it is so singular a circumstance to meet with one of your age, that has not been induced by idle curiosity to visit any other church than the one in which he has been educated, that I feel a strong curiosity to know the history of a life so fortunately regulated. Your education must have been excellent; as indeed is evident from your manners and language. Of which of the States are you a native, Mr. Edwards? for such, I believe, was the name that you gave Judge Temple."

"Of this."

"Of this! I was at a loss to conjecture, from your dialect, which does not partake, particularly, of the peculiarities of any country with which I am acquainted. You have, then, resided much in the cities, for no other part of this country is so fortunate as to possess the constant enjoyment of our excellent liturgy."

The young hunter smiled, as he listened to the divine while he so clearly betrayed from what part of the country he had come himself; but, for reasons probably connected with his present situation, he made no answer.

"I am delighted to meet with you, my young friend, for I think an ingenuous mind, such as I doubt not yours must be, will exhibit all the advantages of a settled doctrine and devout liturgy. You perceive how I was compelled to bend to the humors of my hearers this evening. Good Mr. Jones wished me to read the communion, and, in fact, all the morning service; but, happily, the canons do not require this of an evening. It would have wearied a new congregation; but to-morrow I purpose administering the sacrament, Do you commune, my young friend?"

"I believe not, sir," returned the youth, with a little embarrassment, that was not at all diminished by Miss Grant's pausing involuntarily, and turning her eyes on him in surprise; "I fear that I am not qualified; I have never yet approached the altar; neither would I wish to do it while I find so much of the world clinging to my heart."

"Each must judge for himself," said Mr. Grant; "though I should think that a youth who had never been blown about by the wind of false doctrines, and who has enjoyed the advantages of our liturgy for so many years in its purity, might safely come. Yet, sir, it is a solemn festival, which none should celebrate until there is reason to hope it is not mockery. I observed this evening, in your manner to Judge Temple, a resentment that bordered on one of the worst of human passions, We will cross this brook on the ice; it must bear us all, I think, in safety. Be careful not to slip, my child." While speaking, he descended a little bank by the path, and crossed one of the small streams that poured their waters into the lake; and, turning to see his daughter pass, observed that the youth had advanced, and was kindly directing her footsteps. When all were safely over, he moved up the opposite bank, and continued his discourse. "It was wrong, my dear sir, very wrong, to suffer such feelings to rise, under any circumstances, and especially in the present, where the evil was not intended."

"There is good in the talk of my father," said Mohegan, stopping short, and causing those who were behind him to pause also; "it is the talk of Miquon. The white man may do as his fathers have told him; but the 'Young Eagle' has the blood of a Delaware chief in his veins; it is red, and the stain it makes can only be washed out with the blood of a Mingo."

Mr. Grant was surprised by the interruption of the Indian, and, stopping, faced the speaker. His mild features were confronted to the fierce and determined looks of the chief, and expressed the horror he felt at hearing such sentiments from one who professed the religion of his Saviour. Raising his hands to a level with his head, he exclaimed:

"John, John! is this the religion that you have learned from the Moravians? But no—I will not be so uncharitable as to suppose it. They are a pious, a gentle, and a mild people, and could never tolerate these passions. Listen to the language of the Redeemer: 'But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.' This is the command of God, John, and, without striving to cultivate such feelings, no man can see Him."

The Indian heard the divine with attention; the unusual fire of his eye gradually softened, and his muscles relaxed into their ordinary composure; but, slightly shaking his head, he motioned with dignity for Mr. Grant to resume his walk, and followed himself in silence. The agitation of the divine caused him to move with unusual rapidity along the deep path, and the Indian, without any apparent exertion, kept an equal pace; but the young hunter observed the female to linger in her steps, until a trifling distance intervened between the two former and the latter. Struck by the circumstance, and not perceiving any new impediment to retard her footstep, the youth made a tender of his assistance.

"You are fatigued, Miss Grant," he said; "the snow yields to the foot, and you are unequal to the strides of us men. Step on the crust, I entreat you, and take the help of my arm, Yonder light is, I believe, the house of your father; but it seems yet at some distance."

"I am quite equal to the walk," returned a low, tremulous voice; "but I am startled by the manner of that Indian, Oh! his eye was horrid, as he turned to the moon, in speaking to my father. But I forgot, sir; he is your friend, and by his language may be your relative; and yet of you I do not feel afraid."

The young man stepped on the bank of snow, which firmly sustained his weight, and by a gentle effort induced his companion to follow. Drawing her arm through his own, he lifted his cap from his head, allowing the dark locks to flow in rich curls over his open brow, and walked by her side with an air of conscious pride, as if inviting an examination of his utmost thoughts. Louisa took but a furtive glance at his person, and moved quietly along, at a rate that was greatly quickened by the aid of his arm.

"You are but little acquainted with this peculiar people, Miss Grant," he said, "or you would know that revenge is a virtue with an Indian. They are taught, from infancy upward, to believe it a duty never to allow an injury to pass unrevenged; and nothing but the stronger claims of hospitality can guard one against their resentments where they have power."

"Surely, sir," said Miss Grant, involuntarily withdrawing her arm from his, "you have not been educated with such unholy



sentiments?"

"It might be a sufficient answer to your excellent father to say that I was educated in the church," he returned; "but to you I will add that I have been taught deep and practical lessons of forgiveness. I believe that, on this subject, I have but little cause to reproach myself; it shall be my endeavor that there yet be less."

While speaking, he stopped, and stood with his arm again proffered to her assistance. As he ended, she quietly accepted his offer, and they resumed their walk.

Mr. Grant and Mohegan had reached the door of the former's residence, and stood waiting near its threshold for the arrival of their young companions. The former was earnestly occupied in endeavoring to correct, by his precepts, the evil propensities that he had discovered in the Indian during their conversation; to which the latter listened in profound but respectful attention. On the arrival of the young hunter and the lady, they entered the building. The house stood at some distance from the village, in the centre of a field, surrounded by stumps that were peering above the snow, bearing caps of pure white, nearly two feet in thickness. Not a tree nor a shrub was nigh it; but the house, externally, exhibited that cheerless, unfurnished aspect which is so common to the hastily erected dwellings of a new country. The uninviting character of its outside was, however, happily relieved by the exquisite neatness and comfortable warmth within.

They entered an apartment that was fitted as a parlor, though the large fireplace, with its culinary arrangements, betrayed the domestic uses to which it was occasionally applied. The bright blaze from the hearth rendered the light that proceeded from the candle Louisa produced unnecessary; for the scanty furniture of the room was easily seen and examined by the former. The floor was covered in the centre by a carpet made of rags, a species of manufacture that was then, and yet continues to be, much in use in the interior; while its edges, that were exposed to view, were of unspotted cleanliness. There was a trifling air of better life in a tea-table and work-stand, as well as in an old-fashioned mahogany bookcase; but the chairs, the dining-table, and the rest of the furniture were of the plainest and cheapest construction. Against the walls were hung a few specimens of needle-work and drawing, the former executed with great neatness, though of somewhat equivocal merit in their designs, while the latter were strikingly deficient in both.

One of the former represented a tomb, with a youthful female weeping over it, exhibiting a church with arched windows in the background. On the tomb were the names, with the dates of the births and deaths, of several individuals, all of whom bore the name of Grant. An extremely cursory glance at this record was sufficient to discover to the young hunter the domestic state of the divine. He there read that he was a widower; and that the innocent and timid maiden, who had been his companion, was the only survivor of six children. The knowledge of the dependence which each of these meek Christians had on the other for happiness threw an additional charm around the gentle but kind attentions which the daughter paid to the father.

These observations occurred while the party were seating themselves before the cheerful fire, during which time there was a suspension of discourse. But, when each was comfortably arranged, and Louisa, after laying aside a thin coat of faded silk, and a gypsy hat, that was more becoming to her modest, ingenuous countenance than appropriate to the season, had taken a chair between her father and the youth, the former resumed the conversation.

"I trust, my young friend," he said, "that the education you have received has eradicated most of those revengeful principles which you may have inherited by descent, for I understand from the expressions of John that you have some of the blood of the Delaware tribe. Do not mistake me, I beg, for it is not color nor lineage that constitutes merit; and I know not that he who claims affinity to the proper owners of this soil has not the best right to tread these hills with the lightest conscience."

Mohegan turned solemnly to the speaker, and, with the peculiarly significant gestures of an Indian, he spoke:

"Father, you are not yet past the summer of life; your limbs are young. Go to the highest hill, and look around you. All that you see, from the rising to the setting sun, from the head-waters of the great spring, to where the 'crooked river' \* is hid by the hills, is his. He has Delaware blood, and his right is strong.

\* The Susquehanna means crooked river; "hannah," or "hannock," meant river in many of the native dialects. Thus we find Rappahannock as far south as Virginia.

"But the brother of Miquon is just; he will cut the country in two parts, as the river cuts the lowlands, and will say to the 'Young Eagle,' 'Child of the Delawares! take it—keep it; and be a chief in the land of your fathers.'"

"Never!" exclaimed the young hunter, with a vehemence that destroyed the rapt attention with which the divine and his daughter were listening to the Indian. "The wolf of the forest is not more rapacious for his prey than that man is greedy of gold; and yet his glidings into wealth are subtle as the movements of a serpent."

"Forbear, forbear, my son, forbear," interrupted Mr. Grant. "These angry passions must be subdued. The accidental injury you have received from Judge Temple has heightened the sense of your hereditary wrongs. But remember that the one was unintentional, and that the other is the effect of political changes, which have, in their course, greatly lowered the pride of kings, and swept mighty nations from the face of the earth. Where now are the Philistines, who so often held the children of Israel in bondage? or that city of Babylon, which rioted in luxury and vice, and who styled herself the Queen of Nations in the drunkenness of her pride? Remember the prayer of our holy litany, where we implore the Divine Power—that it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts. The sin of the wrongs which have been done to the natives is shared by Judge Temple only in common with a whole people, and your arm will speedily be restored to its strength."

"This arm!" repeated the youth, pacing the floor in violent agitation. "Think you, sir, that I believe the man a murderer? Oh, no! he is too wily, too cowardly, for such a crime. But let him and his daughter riot in their wealth—a day of retribution will come. No, no, no," he continued, as he trod the floor more calmly—"it is for Mohegan to suspect him of an intent to injure me; but the trifle is not worth a second thought." He seated himself, and hid his face between his hands, as they rested on his knees.

"It is the hereditary violence of a native's passion, my child," said Mr. Grant in a low tone to his affrighted daughter, who was clinging in terror to his arm. "He is mixed with the blood of the Indians, you have heard; and neither the refinements of education nor

the advantages of our excellent liturgy have been able entirely to eradicate the evil. But care and time will do much for him yet.”

Although the divine spoke in a low tone, yet what he uttered was heard by the youth, who raised his head, with a smile of indefinite expression, and spoke more calmly:

“Be not alarmed, Miss Grant, at either the wildness of my manner or that of my dress. I have been carried away by passions that I should struggle to repress. I must attribute it, with your father, to the blood in my veins, although I would not impeach my lineage willingly; for it is all that is left me to boast of. Yes! I am proud of my descent from a Delaware chief, who was a warrior that ennobled human nature. Old Mohegan was his friend, and will vouch for his virtues.”

Mr. Grant here took up the discourse, and, finding the young man more calm, and the aged chief attentive, he entered into a full and theological discussion of the duty of forgiveness. The conversation lasted for more than an hour, when the visitors arose, and, after exchanging good wishes with their entertainers, they departed. At the door they separated, Mohegan taking the direct route to the village, while the youth moved toward the lake. The divine stood at the entrance of his dwelling, regarding the figure of the aged chief as it glided, at an astonishing gait for his years, along the deep path; his black, straight hair just visible over the bundle formed by his blanket, which was sometimes blended with the snow, under the silvery light of the moon. From the rear of the house was a window that overlooked the lake; and here Louisa was found by her father, when he entered, gazing intently on some object in the direction of the eastern mountain. He approached the spot, and saw the figure of the young hunter, at the distance of half a mile, walking with prodigious steps across the wide fields of frozen snow that covered the ice, toward the point where he knew the hut inhabited by the Leather-Stocking was situated on the margin of the lake, under a rock that was crowned by pines and hemlocks. At the next instant, the wild looking form entered the shadow cast from the over-hanging trees, and was lost to view.

“It is marvellous how long the propensities of the savage continue in that remarkable race,” said the good divine; “but if he perseveres as he has commenced, his triumph shall yet be complete. Put me in mind, Louisa, to lend him the homily ‘against peril of idolatry,’ at his next visit.”

“Surety, father, you do not think him in danger of relapsing into the worship of his ancestors?”

“No, my child,” returned the clergyman, laying his hand affectionately on her flaxen locks, and smiling; “his white blood would prevent it; but there is such a thing as the idolatry of our passions.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

"And I'll drink out of the quart pot—  
Here's a health to the barley mow.  
"—Drinking Song.

On one of the corners, where the two principal streets of Templeton intersected each other, stood, as we have already mentioned, the inn called the "Bold Dragoon". In the original plan it was ordained that the village should stretch along the little stream that rushed down the valley; and the street which led from the lake to the academy was intended to be its western boundary. But convenience frequently frustrates the best-regulated plans. The house of Mr., or as, in consequence of commanding the militia of that vicinity, he was called, Captain Hollister, had, at an early day, been erected directly facing the main street, and ostensibly interposed a barrier to its further progress. Horsemen, and subsequently teamsters, however, availed themselves of an opening, at the end of the building, to shorten their passage westward, until in time the regular highway was laid out along this course, and houses were gradually built on either side, so as effectually to prevent any subsequent correction of the evil.

Two material consequences followed this change in the regular plans of Marmaduke. The main street, after running about half its length, was suddenly reduced for precisely that difference in its width; and "Bold Dragoon" became, next to the mansion-house, by far the most conspicuous edifice in the place.

This conspicuousness, aided by the characters of the host and hostess, gave the tavern an advantage over all its future competitors that no circumstances could conquer. An effort was, however, made to do so; and at the corner diagonally opposite, stood a new building that was intended, by its occupants, to look down all opposition. It was a house of wood, ornamented in the prevailing style of architecture, and about the roof and balustrades was one of the three imitators of the mansion-house. The upper windows were filled with rough boards secured by nails, to keep out the cold air—for the edifice was far from finished, although glass was to be seen in the lower apartments, and the light of the powerful fires within denoted that it was already inhabited. The exterior was painted white on the front and on the end which was exposed to the street; but in the rear, and on the side which was intended to join the neighboring house, it was coarsely smeared with Spanish brown. Before the door stood two lofty posts, connected at the top by a beam, from which was suspended an enormous sign, ornamented around its edges with certain curious carvings in pine boards, and on its faces loaded with Masonic emblems. Over these mysterious figures was written, in large letters, "The Templeton Coffee-house, and Traveller's Hotel," and beneath them, "By Habakkuk Foote and Joshua Knapp." This was a fearful rival to the "Bold Dragoon," as our readers will the more readily perceive when we add that the same sonorous names were to be seen over a newly erected store in the village, a hatter's shop, and the gates of a tan-yard. But, either because too much was attempted to be executed well, or that the "Bold Dragoon" had established a reputation which could not be easily shaken, not only Judge Temple and his friends, but most of the villagers also, who were not in debt to the powerful firm we have named, frequented the inn of Captain Hollister on all occasions where such a house was necessary.

On the present evening the limping veteran and his consort were hardly housed after their return from the academy, when the sounds of stamping feet at their threshold announced the approach of visitors, who were probably assembling with a view to compare opinions on the subject of the ceremonies they had witnessed.

The public, or as it was called, the "bar-room," of the "Bold Dragoon," was a spacious apartment, lined on three sides with benches and on the fourth by fireplaces. Of the latter there were two of such size as to occupy, with their enormous jambs, the whole of that side of the apartment where they were placed, excepting room enough for a door or two, and a little apartment in one corner, which was protected by miniature palisades, and profusely garnished with bottles and glasses. In the entrance to this sanctuary Mrs. Hollister was seated, with great gravity in her air, while her husband occupied himself with stirring the fires, moving the logs with a large stake burnt to a point at one end.

"There, sargeant, dear," said the landlady, after she thought the veteran had got the logs arranged in the most judicious manner, "give over poking, for it's no good ye'll be doing, now that they burn so conveniently. There's the glasses on the table there, and the mug that the doctor was taking his cider and ginger in, before the fire here—just put them in the bar, will ye? for we'll be having the jooge, and the Major, and Mr. Jones down the night, without reckoning Benjamin Poomp, and the lawyers; so ye'll be fixing the room tidy; and put both flip irons in the coals; and tell Jude, the lazy black baste, that if she's no be cleaning up the kitchen I'll turn her out of the house, and she may live wid the jontlemen that kape the 'Coffee house,' good luck to 'em. Och! sargeant, sure it's a great privilege to go to a mateing where a body can sit asy, without joomping up and down so often, as this Mr. Grant is doing that same."

"It's a privilege at all times, Mrs. Hollister, whether we stand or be seated; or, as good Mr. Whitefield used to do after he had made a wearisome day's march, get on our knees and pray, like Moses of old, with a flanker to the right and left to lift his hands to heaven," returned her husband, who composedly performed what she had directed to be done. "It was a very pretty fight, Betty, that the Israelites had on that day with the Amalekites, It seems that they fought on a plain, for Moses is mentioned as having gone on the heights to overlook the battle, and wrestle in prayer; and if I should judge, with my little learning, the Israelites depended mainly on their horse, for it was written 'that Joshua cut up the enemy with the edge of the sword; from which I infer, not only that they were horse, but well disciplined troops. Indeed, it says as much as that they were chosen men; quite likely volunteers; for raw dragoons seldom strike with the edge of their swords, particularly if the weapon be any way crooked."

"Pshaw! why do ye bother yourself wid texts, man, about so small a matter?" interrupted the landlady; "sure, it was the Lord who was with 'em; for he always sided with the Jews, before they fell away; and it's but little matter what kind of men Joshua commanded, so that he was doing the right bidding. Aven them cursed millaishy, the Lord forgive me for swearing, that was the death of him, wid

their cowardice, would have carried the day in old times. There's no reason to be thinking that the soldiers were used to the drill."

"I must say, Mrs. Hollister, that I have not often seen raw troops fight better than the left flank of the militia, at the time you mention. They rallied handsomely, and that without beat of drum, which is no easy thing to do under fire, and were very steady till he fell. But the Scriptures contain no unnecessary words; and I will maintain that horse, who know how to strike with the edge of the sword, must be well disciplined. Many a good sermon has been preached about smaller matters than that one word! If the text was not meant to be particular, why wasn't it written with the sword, and not with the edge? Now, a back-handed stroke, on the edge, takes long practice. Goodness! what an argument would Mr. Whitefield make of that word edge! As to the captain, if he had only called up the guard of dragoons when he rallied the foot, they would have shown the enemy what the edge of a sword was; for, although there was no commissioned officer with them, yet I think I must say," the veteran continued, stiffening his cravat about his throat, and raising himself up with the air of a drill-sergeant, "they were led by a man who knew how to bring them on, in spite of the ravine."

"Is it laid on ye would," cried the landlady, "when ye know yourself, Mr. Hollister, that the baste he rode was but little able to jump from one rock to another, and the animal was as spry as a squirrel? Och! but it's useless to talk, for he's gone this many a year. I would that he had lived to see the true light; but there's mercy for a brave soul, that died in the saddle, fighting for the liberty. It is a poor tombstone they have given him, anyway, and many a good one that died like himself; but the sign is very like, and I will be keeping it up, while the blacksmith can make a hook for it to swing on, for all the 'coffee-houses' betwixt this and Albany."

There is no saying where this desultory conversation would have led the worthy couple, had not the men, who were stamping the snow off their feet on the little platform before the door, suddenly ceased their occupation, and entered the bar-room.

For ten or fifteen minutes the different individuals, who intended either to bestow or receive edification before the fires of the "Bold Dragoon" on that evening, were collecting, until the benches were nearly filled with men of different occupations. Dr. Todd and a slovenly-looking, shabby-genteel young man, who took tobacco profusely, wore a coat of imported cloth cut with something like a fashionable air, frequently exhibited a large French silver watch, with a chain of woven hair and a silver key, and who, altogether, seemed as much above the artisans around him as he was himself inferior to the real gentleman, occupied a high-back wooden settee, in the most comfortable corner in the apartment.

Sundry brown mugs, containing cider or beer, were placed between the heavy andirons, and little groups were found among the guests as subjects arose or the liquor was passed from one to the other. No man was seen to drink by himself, nor in any instance was more than one vessel considered necessary for the same beverage; but the glass or the mug was passed from hand to hand until a chasm in the line or a regard to the rights of ownership would regularly restore the dregs of the potation to him who defrayed the cost.

Toasts were uniformly drunk; and occasionally some one who conceived himself peculiarly endowed by Nature to shine in the way of wit would attempt some such sentiment as "hoping that he" who treated "might make a better man than his father;" or "live till all his friends wished him dead;" while the more humble pot-companion contented himself by saying, with a most composing gravity in his air, "Come, here's luck," or by expressing some other equally comprehensive desire. In every instance the veteran landlord was requested to imitate the custom of the cupbearers to kings, and taste the liquor he presented, by the invitation of "After you is manners," with which request he ordinarily complied by wetting his lips, first expressing the wish of "Here's hoping," leaving it to the imagination of the hearers to fill the vacuum by whatever good each thought most desirable. During these movements the landlady was busily occupied with mixing the various compounds required by her customers, with her own hands, and occasionally exchanging greetings and inquiries concerning the conditions of their respective families, with such of the villagers as approached the bar.

At length the common thirst being in some measure assuaged, conversation of a more general nature became the order of the hour. The physician and his companion, who was one of the two lawyers of the village, being considered the best qualified to maintain a public discourse with credit, were the principal speakers, though a remark was hazarded, now and then, by Mr. Doolittle, who was thought to be their inferior only in the enviable point of education. A general silence was produced on all but the two speakers, by the following observation from the practitioner of the law:

"So, Dr. Todd, I understand that you have been performing an important operation this evening by cutting a charge of buckshot from the shoulder of the son of Leather-Stocking?"

"Yes, sir," returned the other, elevating his little head with an air of importance. "I had a small job up at the Judge's in that way; it was, however, but a trifle to what it might have been, had it gone through the body. The shoulder is not a very vital part; and I think the young man will soon be well. But I did not know that the patient was a son of Leather-Stocking; it is news to me to hear that Natty had a wife."

"It is by no means a necessary consequence," returned the other, winking, with a shrewd look around the bar room; "there is such a thing, I suppose you know, in law as a *filius nullius*."

"Spake it out, man," exclaimed the landlady; "spake it out in king's English; what for should ye be talking Indian in a room full of Christian folks, though it is about a poor hunter, who is but little better in his ways than the wild savages themselves? Och! it's to be hoped that the missionaries will, in his own time, make a conversion of the poor devils; and then it will matter little of what color is the skin, or whether there be wool or hair on the head."

"Oh! it is Latin, not Indian, Miss Hollister!" returned the lawyer, repeating his winks and shrewd looks; "and Dr. Todd understands Latin, or how would he read the labels on his gailpots and drawers? No, no, Miss Hollister, the doctor understands me; don't you, doctor?"

"Hem—why, I guess I am not far out of the way," returned Elnathan, endeavoring to imitate the expression of the other's countenance, by looking jocular. "Latin is a queer language, gentlemen; now I rather guess there is no one in the room, except Squire Lippet, who can believe that 'Far. Av.' means oatmeal, in English."

The lawyer in his turn was a good deal embarrassed by this display of learning; for, although he actually had taken his first degree at one of the eastern universities, he was somewhat puzzled with the terms used by his companion. It was dangerous, however, to appear

to be out done in learning in a public bar-room, and before so many of his clients; he therefore put the best face on the matter, and laughed knowingly as if there were a good joke concealed under it, that was understood only by the physician and himself. All this was attentively observed by the listeners, who exchanged looks of approbation; and the expressions of "tonguey mati," and "I guess Squire Lippert knows if anybody does," were heard in different parts of the room, as vouchers for the admiration of his auditors. Thus encouraged, the lawyer rose from his chair, and turning his back to the fire, and facing the company, he continued:

"The son of Natty, or the son of nobody, I hope the young man is not going to let the matter drop. This is a country of law; and I should like to see it fairly tried, whether a man who owns, or says he owns, a hundred thousand acres of land, has any more right to shoot a body than another. What do you think of it, Dr. Todd?"

"Oh, sir, I am of opinion that the gentleman will soon be well, as I said before; the wound isn't in a vital part; and as the ball was extracted so soon, and the shoulder was what I call well attended to, I do not think there is as much danger as there might have been."

"I say, Squire Doolittle," continued the attorney, raising his voice, "you are a magistrate, and know what is law and what is not law. I ask you, sir, if shooting a man is a thing that is to be settled so very easily? Suppose, sir, that the young man had a wife and family; and suppose that he was a mechanic like yourself, sir; and suppose that his family depended on him for bread; and suppose that the ball, instead of merely going through the flesh, had broken the shoulder-blade, and crippled him forever; I ask you all, gentlemen, supposing this to be the case, whether a jury wouldn't give what I call handsome damages?"

As the close of this supposititious case was addressed to the company generally, Hiram did not at first consider himself called on for a reply; but finding the eyes of the listeners bent on him in expectation, he remembered his character for judicial discrimination, and spoke, observing a due degree of deliberation and dignity.

"Why, if a man should shoot another," he said, "and if he should do it on purpose and if the law took notice on't, and if a jury should find him guilty, it would be likely to turn out a state-prison matter."

"It would so, sir," returned the attorney. "The law, gentlemen, is no respecter of persons in a free country. It is one of the great blessings that has been handed down to us from our ancestors, that all men are equal in the eye of the laws, as they are by nater. Though some may get property, no one knows how, yet they are not privileged to transgress the laws any more than the poorest citizen in the State. This is my notion, gentlemen: and I think that it a man had a mind to bring this matter up, something might be made out of it that would help pay for the salve—ha! doctor!"

"Why, sir," returned the physician, who appeared a little uneasy at the turn the conversation was taking, "I have the promise of Judge Temple before men—not but what I would take his word as soon as his note of hand—but it was before men. Let me see—there was Mounshier Ler Quow, and Squire Jones, and Major Hartmann, and Miss Pettibone, and one or two of the blacks by, when he said that his pocket would amply reward me for what I did."

"Was the promise made before or after the service was performed?" asked the attorney.

"It might have been both," returned the discreet physician; "though I'm certain he said so before I undertook the dressing."

"But it seems that he said his pocket should reward you, doctor," observed Hiram. "Now I don't know that the law will hold a man to such a promise; he might give you his pocket with sixpence in't, and tell you to take your pay out on't."

"That would not be a reward in the eye of the law," interrupted the attorney—"not what is called a 'quid pro quo;' nor is the pocket to be considered as an agent, but as part of a man's own person, that is, in this particular. I am of opinion that an action would lie on that promise, and I will undertake to bear him out, free of costs, if he don't recover."

To this proposition the physician made no reply; but he was observed to cast his eyes around him, as if to enumerate the witnesses, in order to substantiate this promise also, at a future day, should it prove necessary. A subject so momentous as that of suing Judge Temple was not very palatable to the present company in so public a place; and a short silence ensued, that was only interrupted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of Natty himself.

The old hunter carried in his hand his never-failing companion, the rifle; and although all of the company were uncovered excepting the lawyer, who wore his hat on one side, with a certain dam'ne air, Natty moved to the front of one of the fires without in the least altering any part of his dress or appearance. Several questions were addressed to him, on the subject of the game he had killed, which he answered readily, and with some little interest; and the landlord, between whom and Natty there existed much cordiality, on account of their both having been soldiers in youth, offered him a glass of a liquid which, if we might judge from its reception, was no unwelcome guest. When the forester had got his potation also, he quietly took his seat on the end of one of the logs that lay nigh the fires, and the slight interruption produced by his entrance seemed to be forgotten.

"The testimony of the blacks could not be taken, sir," continued the lawyer, "for they are all the property of Mr. Jones, who owns their time. But there is a way by which Judge Temple, or any other man, might be made to pay for shooting another, and for the cure in the bargain. There is a way, I say, and that without going into the 'court of errors,' too."

"And a mighty big error ye would make of it, Mister Todd," cried the landlady, "should ye be putting the matter into the law at all, with Joodge Temple, who has a purse as long as one of them pines on the hill, and who is an asy man to dale wid, if yees but mind the humor of him. He's a good man is Joodge Temple, and a kind one, and one who will be no the likelier to do the pratty thing, becuse ye would wish to tarrify him wid the law. I know of but one objection to the same, which is an over-careless ness about his sowl. It's neither a Methodie, nor a Papish, nor Parsbetyrian, that he is, but just nothing at all; and it's hard to think that he, 'who will not fight the good fight, under the banners of a rig'lar church, in this world, will be mustered among the chosen in heaven,' as my husband, the captain there, as ye call him, says—though there is but one captain that I know, who deserves the name. I hopes, Lather-Stocking, ye'll no be foolish, and putting the boy up to try the law in the matter; for 'twill be an evil day to ye both, when ye first turn the skin of so paceable an animal as a sheep into a bone of contention, The lad is wilcome to his drink for nothing, until his shoulther will bear the rifle agin."

"Well, that's gin'rous," was heard from several mouths at once, for this was a company in which a liberal offer was not thrown away; while the hunter, instead of expressing any of that indignation which he might be supposed to feel, at hearing the hurt of his young companion alluded to, opened his mouth, with the silent laugh for which he was so remarkable; and after he had indulged his humor, made this reply:

"I knowed the Judge would do nothing with his smooth bore when he got out of his sleigh. I never saw but one smooth-bore that would carry at all, and that was a French ducking-piece, upon the big lakes; it had a barrel half as long agin as my rifle, and would throw fine shot into a goose at one hundred yards; but it made dreadful work with the game, and you wanted a boat to carry it about in. When I went with Sir William agin' the French, at Fort Niagara, all the rangers used the rifle; and a dreadful weapon it is, in the hands of one who knows how to charge it, and keep a steady aim. The captain knows, for he says he was a soldier in Shirley's; and, though they were nothing but baggonet-men, he must know how we cut up the French and Iroquois in the skrimmages in that war. Chingachgook, which means 'Big Serpent' in English, old John Mohegan, who lives up at the hut with me, was a great warrior then, and was out with us; he can tell all about it, too; though he was overhand for the tomahawk, never firing more than once or twice, before he was running in for the scalps. Ah! times is dreadfully altered since then. Why, doctor, there was nothing but a foot path, or at the most a track for pack-horses, along the Mohawk, from the Jarman Flats up to the forts. Now, they say, they talk of running one of them wide roads with gates on it along the river; first making a road, and then fencing it up! I hunted one season back of the Kaatskills, nigh-hand to the settlements, and the dogs often lost the scent, when they came to them highways, there was so much travel on them; though I can't say that the brutes was of a very good breed. Old Hector will wind a deer, in the fall of the year, across the broadest place in the Otsego, and that is a mile and a half, for I paced it my self on the ice, when the tract was first surveyed, under the Indian grant."

"It sames to me, Natty, but a sorry compliment to call your comrad after the evil one," said the landlady; "and it's no much like a snake that old John is looking now, Nimrod would be a more becoming name for the lad, and a more Christian, too, seeing that it conies from the Bible. The sargeant read me the chapter about him, the night before my christening, and a mighty asement it was to listen to anything from the book."

"Old John and Chingachgook were very different men to look on," returned the hunter, shaking his head at his melancholy recollections. "In the 'fifty-eighth war' he was in the middle of manhood, and taller than now by three inches. If you had seen him, as I did, the morning we beat Dieskau, from behind our log walls, you would have called him as comely a redskin as ye ever set eyes on. He was naked all to his breech-cloth and leggins; and you never seed a creatur' so handsomely painted. One side of his face was red and the other black. His head was shaved clean, all to a few hairs on the crown, where he wore a tuft of eagle's feathers, as bright as if they had come from a peacock's tail. He had colored his sides so that they looked like anatomy, ribs and all, for Chingachgook had a great taste in such things, so that, what with his bold, fiery countenance, his knife, and his tomahawk, I have never seen a fiercer warrior on the ground. He played his part, too, like a man, for I saw him next day with thirteen scalps on his pole. And I will say this for the 'Big Snake,' that he always dealt fair, and never scalped any that he didn't kill with his own hands."

"Well, well!" cried the landlady, "fighting is fighting anyway, and there is different fashions in the thing; though I can't say that I relish mangling a body after the breath is out of it; neither do I think it can be uphild by doctrine. I hope, sargeant, ye niver was helping in sich evil worrek."

"It was my duty to keep my ranks, and to stand or fall by the baggonet or lead," returned the veteran. "I was then in the fort, and seldom leaving my place, saw but little of the savages, who kept on the flanks or in front, skrimmaging. I remember, howsomever, to have heard mention made of the 'Great Snake,' as he was called, for he was a chief of renown; but little did I ever expect to see him enlisted in the cause of Christianity, and civilized like old John."

"Oh! he was Christianized by the Moravians, who were always over-intimate with the Delawares," said Leather-Stocking. "It's my opinion that, had they been left to themselves, there would be no such doings now about the head-waters of the two rivers, and that these hills mought have been kept as good hunting-ground by their right owner, who is not too old to carry a rifle, and whose sight is as true as a fish-hawk hovering—"

He was interrupted by more stamping at the door, and presently the party from the mansion-house entered, followed by the Indian himself.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"There's quart-pot, pint-pot.  
Mit-pint, Gill-pot, half-gill, nipperkin.  
And the brown bowl—  
Here's a health to the barley mow,  
My brave boys,  
Here's a health to the barley mow."  
—Drinking Song.

Some little commotion was produced by the appearance of the new guests, during which the lawyer slunk from the room. Most of the men approached Marmaduke, and shook his offered hand, hoping "that the Judge was well;" while Major Hartmann having laid aside his hat and wig, and substituted for the latter a warm, peaked woollen nightcap, took his seat very quietly on one end of the settee, which was relinquished by its former occupant. His tobacco-box was next produced, and a clean pipe was handed him by the landlord. When he had succeeded in raising a smoke, the Major gave a long whiff, and, turning his head toward the bar, he said:

"Petty, pring in ter toddy."

In the mean time the Judge had exchanged his salutations with most of the company, and taken a place by the side of the Major, and Richard had hustled himself into the most comfortable seat in the room. Mr. Le Quoi was the last seated, nor did he venture to place his chair finally, until by frequent removals he had ascertained that he could not possibly intercept a ray of heat front any individual present. Mohegan found a place on an end of one of the benches, and somewhat approximated to the bar.

When these movements had subsided, the Judge remarked pleasantly: "Well, Betty, I find you retain your popularity through all weathers, against all rivals, and among all religions. How liked you the sermon?"

"Is it the sarmon?" exclaimed the landlady. "I can't say but it was rasonable; but the prayers is mighty unasy. It's no small a matter for a body in their fifty-nint' year to be moving so much in church. Mr. Grant sames a godly man, any way, and his garrel a hommle on; and a devout. Here, John, is a mug of cider, laced with whiskey. An Indian will drink cider, though he niver be athirst."

"I must say," observed Hiram, with due deliberation, "that it was a tongney thing; and I rather guess that it gave considerable satisfaction. There was one part, though, which might have been left out, or something else put in; but then I s'pose that, as it was a written discourse, it is not so easily altered as where a minister preaches without notes."

"Ày! there's the rub, Joodge," cried the landlady. "How can a man stand up and be preaching his word, when all that he is saying is written down, and he is as much tied to it as iver a thaving dragoon was to the pickets?"

"Well, well," cried Marmaduke, waving his hand for silence, "there is enough said; as Mr. Grant told us, there are different sentiments on such subjects, and in my opinion he spoke most sensibly. So, Jotham, I am told you have sold your betterments to a new settler, and have moved into the village and opened a school. Was it cash or dicker?"

The man who was thus addressed occupied a seat immediately behind Marmaduke, and one who was ignorant of the extent of the Judge's observation might have thought he would have escaped notice. He was of a thin, shapeless figure, with a discontented expression of countenance, and with something extremely shiftless in his whole air. Thus spoken to, after turning and twisting a little, by way of preparation, he made a reply:

"Why part cash and part dicker. I sold out to a Pumfietman who was so'thin' forehanded. He was to give me ten dollar an acre for the clearin', and one dollar an acre over the first cost on the woodland, and we agreed to leave the buildin's to men. So I tuck Asa Montagu, and he tuck Absalom Bement, and they two tuck old Squire Napthali Green. And so they had a meetin', and made out a vardict of eighty dollars for the buildin's. There was twelve acres of clearin' at ten dollars, and eighty-eight at one, and the whole came to two hundred and eighty-six dollars and a half, after paying the men."

"Hum," said Marmaduke, "what did you give for the place?"

"Why, besides what's comin' to the Judge, I gi'n my brother Tim a hundred dollars for his bargain; but then there's a new house on't, that cost me sixty more, and I paid Moses a hundred dollars for choppin', and loggin', and sowin', so that the whole stood to me in about two hundred and sixty dollars. But then I had a great crop oft on't, and as I got twenty-six dollars and a half more than it cost, I conclude I made a pretty good trade on't."

"Yes, but you forgot that the crop was yours without the trade, and you have turned yourself out of doors for twenty-six dollars."

"Oh! the Judge is clean out," said the man with a look of sagacious calculation; "he turned out a span of horses, that is wuth a hundred and fifty dollars of any man's money, with a bran-new wagon; fifty dollars in cash, and a good note for eighty more; and a side-saddle that was valued at seven and a half—so there was jist twelve shillings betwixt us. I wanted him to turn out a set of harness, and take the cow and the sap troughs. He wouldn't—but I saw through it; he thought I should have to buy the tacklin' afore I could use the wagon and horses; but I knowed a thing or two myself; I should like to know of what use is the tacklin' to him! I offered him to trade back agin for one hundred and fifty-five. But my woman said she wanted to churn, so I tuck a churn for the change."

"And what do you mean to do with your time this winter? You must remember that time is money."

"Why, as master has gone down country to see his mother, who, they say, is going to make a die on't, I agreed to take the school in hand till he comes back. It times doesn't get worse in the spring, I've some notion of going into trade, or maybe I may move off to the Genesee; they say they are carryin' on a great stroke of business that-a-way. If the wust comes to the wust, I can but work at my trade, for I was brought up in a shoe manufactory."

It would seem that Marmaduke did not think his society of sufficient value to attempt inducing him to remain where he was, for he

addressed no further discourse to the man, but turned his attention to other subjects. After a short pause, Hiram ventured a question:

"What news does the Judge bring us from the Legislature? It's not likely that Congress has done much this session; or maybe the French haven't fit any more battles lately?"

"The French, since they have beheaded their king, have done nothing but fight," returned the Judge. "The character of the nation seems changed. I knew many French gentlemen during our war, and they all appeared to me to be men of great humanity and goodness of heart; but these Jacobins are as blood thirsty as bull-dogs."

"There was one Roshambow wid us down at Yorrek town," cried the landlady "a mighty pratty man he was too; and their horse was the very same. It was there that the sargeant got the hurt in the leg from the English batteries, bad luck to 'em."

"Oh! mon pauvre roil" muttered Monsieur Le Quoi.

"The Legislature have been passing laws," continued Marmaduke, "that the country much required. Among others, there is an act prohibiting the drawing of seines, at any other than proper seasons, in certain of our streams and small lakes; and another, to prohibit the killing of deer in the teeming months. These are laws that were loudly called for by judicious men; nor do I despair of getting an act to make the unlawful felling of timber a criminal offence."

The hunter listened to this detail with breathless attention, and, when the Judge had ended, he laughed in open derision.

"You may make your laws, Judge," he cried, "but who will you find to watch the mountains through the long summer days, or the lakes at night? Game is game, and he who finds may kill; that has been the law in these mountains for forty years to my sartain knowledge; and I think one old law is worth two new ones. None but a green one would wish to kill a doe with a fa'n by its side, unless his moccasins were getting old, or his leggins ragged, for the flesh is lean and coarse. But a rifle rings among the rocks along the lake shore, sometimes, as if fifty pieces were fired at once—it would be hard to tell where the man stood who pulled the trigger."

"Armed with the dignity of the law, Mr. Bumppo," returned the Judge, gravely, "a vigilant magistrate can prevent much of the evil that has hitherto prevailed, and which is already rendering the game scarce. I hope to live to see the day when a man's rights in his game shall be as much respected as his title to his farm."

"Your titles and your farms are all new together," cried Natty; "but laws should be equal, and not more for one than another. I shot a deer, last Wednesday was a fort night, and it floundered through the snow-banks till it got over a brush fence; I caught the lock of my rifle in the twigs in following, and was kept back, until finally the creature got off. Now I want to know who is to pay me for that deer; and a fine buck it was. If there hadn't been a fence I should have gotten another shot into it; and I never drewed upon anything that hadn't wings three times running, in my born days. No, no, Judge, it's the farmers that makes the game scarce, and not the hunters."

"Ter teer is not so plenty as in tee old war, Pumpo," said the Major, who had been an attentive listener, amid clouds of smoke; "put ter lant is not mate as for ter teer to live on, put for Christians."

"Why, Major, I believe you're a friend to justice and the right, though you go so often to the grand house; but it's a hard case to a man to have his honest calling for a livelihood stopped by laws, and that, too, when, if right was done, he mought hunt or fish on any day in the week, or on the best flat in the Patent, if he was so minded."

"I unterstant you, Letter-Stockint," returned the Major, fixing his black eyes, with a look of peculiar meaning, on the hunter: "put you didn't use to be so prutent as to look ahet mit so much care."

"Maybe there wasn't so much occasion," said the hunter, a little sulkily; when he sank into a silence from which he was not roused for some time.

"The Judge was saying so'thin' about the French," Hiram observed when the pause in the conversation had continued a decent time.

"Yes, sir," returned Marmaduke, "the Jacobins of France seem rushing from one act of licentiousness to an other, They continue those murders which are dignified by the name of executions. You have heard that they have added the death of their queen to the long list of their crimes."

"Les monstres!" again murmured Monsieur Le Quoi, turning himself suddenly in his chair, with a convulsive start.

"The province of La Vendée is laid waste by the troops of the republic, and hundreds of its inhabitants, who are royalists in their sentiments, are shot at a time. La Vendée is a district in the southwest of France, that continues yet much attached to the family of the Bourbons; doubtless Monsieur Le Quoi is acquainted with it, and can describe it more faithfully."

"Non, non, non, mon cher ami," returned the Frenchman in a suppressed voice, but speaking rapidly, and gesticulating with his right hand, as if for mercy, while with his left he concealed his eyes.

"There have been many battles fought lately," continued Marmaduke, "and the infuriated republicans are too often victorious. I cannot say, however, that I am sorry that they have captured Toulon from the English, for it is a place to which they have a just right."

"Ah—ha!" exclaimed Monsieur Le Quoi, springing on his feet and flourishing both arms with great animation; "ces Anglais!"

The Frenchman continued to move about the room with great alacrity for a few minutes, repeating his exclamations to himself; when overcome by the contrary nature of his emotions, he suddenly burst out of the house, and was seen wading through the snow toward his little shop, waving his arms on high, as if to pluck down honor from the moon. His departure excited but little surprise, for the villagers were used to his manner; but Major Hartmann laughed outright, for the first during his visit, as he lifted the mug, and observed:

"Ter Frenchman is mat—put he is goot as for noting to trink: he is trunk mit joy."

"The French are good soldiers," said Captain Hollis ter; "they stood us in hand a good turn at Yorktown; nor do I think, although I am an ignorant man about the great movements of the army, that his excellency would have been able to march against Cornwallis without their reinforcements."

"Ye spake the trot', sargeant," interrupted his wife, "and I would iver have ye be doing the same. It's varry pratty men is the French;



and jist when I stopt the cart, the time when ye was pushing on in front it was, to kape the riglers in, a rigiment of the jontlemen marched by, and so I dealt them out to their liking. Was it pay I got? Sure did I, and in good solid crowns; the divil a bit of continental could they muster among them all, for love nor money. Och! the Lord forgive me for swearing and spakeing of such vanities; but this I will say for the French, that they paid in good silver; and one glass would go a great way wid 'em, for they gin'rally handed it back wid a drop in the cup; and that's a brisk trade, Joodge, where the pay is good, and the men not over-partic'lar."

"A thriving trade, Mrs. Hollister," said Marmaduke. "But what has become of Richard? he jumped up as soon as seated, and has been absent so long that I am really fearful he has frozen."

"No fear of that, Cousin 'Duke," cried the gentleman himself; "business will sometimes keep a man warm the coldest night that ever snapt in the mountains. Betty, your husband told me, as we came out of church, that your hogs were getting mangy, and so I have been out to take a look at them, and found it true. I stepped across, doctor, and got your boy to weigh me out a pound of salts, and have been mixing it with their swill. I'll bet a saddle of venison against a gray squirrel that they are better in a week. And now, Mrs. Hollister, I'm ready for a hissing mug of flip."

"Sure I know'd ye'd be wanting that same," said the landlady; "it's fixt and ready to the boiling. Sargeant, dear, be handing up the iron, will ye?—no, the one on the far fire, it's black, ye will see. Ah! you've the thing now; look if it's not as red as a cherry." The beverage was heated, and Richard took that kind of draught which men are apt to indulge in who think that they have just executed a clever thing, especially when they like the liquor.

"Oh! you have a hand. Betty, that was formed to mix flip," cried Richard, when he paused for breath. "The very iron has a flavor in it. Here, John, drink, man, drink! I and you and Dr. Todd have done a good thing with the shoulder of that lad this very night. 'Duke, I made a song while you were gone—one day when I had nothing to do; so I'll sing you a verse or two, though I haven't really determined on the tune yet."

"What is life but a scene of care, Where each one must toil in his way? Then let us be jolly, and prove that we are A set of good fellows, who seem very rare, And can laugh and sing all the day. Then let us be jolly And cast away folly, For grief turns a black head to gray."

"There, 'Duke, what do you think of that? There is another verse of it, all but the last line. I haven't got a rhyme for the last line yet. Well, old John, what do you think of the music? as good as one of your war-songs, ha?"

"Good!" said Mohegan, who had been sharing deeply in the potations of the landlady, besides paying a proper respect to the passing mugs of the Major and Marmaduke.

"Bravo! pravo! Richart," cried the Major, whose black eyes were beginning to swim in moisture; "pravisimo his a goot song; put Natty Pumpo a petter. Letter-Stockint, vilt sing? say, olt poy, vilt sing ter song as about ter woofs?"

"No, no, Major," returned the hunter, with a melancholy shake of the head, "I have lived to see what I thought eyes could never behold in these hills, and I have no heart left for singing. If he that has a right to be master and ruler here is forced to squinch his thirst, when a-dry, with snow-Water, it ill becomes them that have lived by his bounty to be making merry, as if there was nothing in the world but sunshine and summer."

When he had spoken, Leather-Stocking again dropped his head on his knees, and concealed his hard and wrinkled features with his hands. The change from the excessive cold without to the heat of the bar-room, coupled with the depth and frequency of Richard's draughts, had already levelled whatever inequality there might have existed between him and the other guests, on the score of spirits; and he now held out a pair of swimming mugs of foaming flip toward the hunter, as he cried:

"Merry! ay! merry Christmas to you, old boy! Sun shine and summer! no! you are blind, Leather-Stocking, 'tis moonshine and winter—take these spectacles, and open your eyes—"

So let us be jolly,  
And cast away folly,  
For grief turns a black head to gray.

—Hear how old John turns his quavers. What damned dull music an Indian song is, after all, Major! I wonder if they ever sing by note."

While Richard was singing and talking, Mohegan was uttering dull, monotonous tones, keeping time by a gentle motion of his head and body. He made use of but few words, and such as he did utter were in his native language, and consequently only understood by himself and Natty. Without heeding Richard, he continued to sing a kind of wild, melancholy air, that rose, at times, in sudden and quite elevated notes, and then fell again into the low, quavering sounds that seemed to compose the character of his music.

The attention of the company was now much divided, the men in the rear having formed themselves into little groups, where they were discussing various matters; among the principal of which were the treatment of mangy hogs and Parson Grant's preaching; while Dr. Todd was endeavoring to explain to Marmaduke the nature of the hurt received by the young hunter. Mohegan continued to sing, while his countenance was becoming vacant, though, coupled with his thick, bushy hair, it was assuming an expression very much like brutal ferocity. His notes were gradually growing louder, and soon rose to a height that caused a general cessation in the discourse. The hunter now raised his head again, and addressed the old warrior warmly in the Delaware language, which, for the benefit of our readers, we shall render freely into English.

"Why do you sing of your battles, Chingachgook, and of the warriors you have slain, when the worst enemy of all is near you, and keeps the Young Eagle from his rights? I have fought in as many battles as any warrior in your tribe, but cannot boast of my deeds at such a time as this."

"Hawk-eye," said the Indian, tottering with a doubtful step from his place, "I am the Great Snake of the Delawares; I can track the Mingoes like an adder that is stealing on the whip-poor-will's eggs, and strike them like the rattlesnake dead at a blow. The white man made the tomahawk of Chingachgook bright as the waters of Otsego, when the last sun is shining; but it is red with the blood of the

Maquas."

"And why have you slain the Mingo warriors? Was it not to keep these hunting-grounds and lakes to your father's children? and were they not given in solemn council to the Fire-eater? and does not the blood of a warrior run in the veins of a young chief, who should speak aloud where his voice is now too low to be heard?"

The appeal of the hunter seemed in some measure to recall the confused faculties of the Indian, who turned his face toward the listeners and gazed intently on the Judge. He shook his head, throwing his hair back from his countenance, and exposed eyes that were glaring with an expression of wild resentment. But the man was not himself. His hand seemed to make a fruitless effort to release his tomahawk, which was confined by its handle to his belt, while his eyes gradually became vacant. Richard at that instant thrusting a mug before him, his features changed to the grin of idiocy, and seizing the vessel with both hands, he sank backward on the bench and drank until satiated, when he made an effort to lay aside the mug with the helplessness of total inebriety.

"Shed not blood!" exclaimed the hunter, as he watched the countenance of the Indian in its moment of ferocity; "but he is drunk and can do no harm. This is the way with all the savages; give them liquor, and they make dogs of themselves. Well, well—the day will come when right will be done; and we must have patience."

Natty still spoke in the Delaware language, and of course was not understood. He had hardly concluded before Richard cried:

"Well, old John is soon sewed up. Give him a berth, captain, in the barn, and I will pay for it. I am rich to night, ten times richer than 'Duke, with all his lands, and military lots, and funded debts, and bonds, and mortgages,

'Come, let us be jolly,  
And cast away folly, For grief--'

"Drink, King Hiram—drink, Mr. Doo-nothing—drink, sir, I say. This is a Christmas eve, which comes, you know, but once a year."

"He! he! he! the squire is quite moosical to-night," said Hiram, whose visage began to give marvellous signs of relaxation. "I rather guess we shall make a church on't yet, squire?"

"A church, Mr. Doolittle! we will make a cathedral of it! bishops, priests, deacons, wardens, vestry, and choir; organ, organist, amid bellows! By the Lord Harry, as Benjamin says, we will clap a steeple on the other end of it, and make two churches of it. What say you, 'Duke, will you pay? ha! my cousin Judge, wilt pay?"

"Thou makest such a noise, Dickon," returned Marmaduke, "it is impossible that I can hear what Dr. Todd is saying. I think thou observedst, it is probable the wound will fester, so as to occasion danger to the limb in this cold weather?"

"Out of nater, sir, quite out of nater," said Elnathan, attempting to expectorate, but succeeding only in throwing a light, frothy substance, like a flake of snow, into the fire—"quite out of nater that a wound so well dressed, and with the ball in my pocket, should fester. I s'pose, as the Judge talks of taking the young man into his house, it will be most convenient if I make but one charge on't."

"I should think one would do," returned Marmaduke, with that arch smile that so often beamed on his face; leaving the beholder in doubt whether he most enjoyed the character of his companion or his own covert humor. The landlord had succeeded in placing the Indian on some straw in one of his outbuildings, where, covered with his own blanket, John continued for the remainder of the night.

In the mean time, Major Hartmann began to grow noisy and jocular; glass succeeded glass, and mug after mug was introduced, until the carousal had run deep into the night, or rather morning; when the veteran German expressed an inclination to return to the mansion-house. Most of the party had already retired, but Marmaduke knew the habits of his friend too well to suggest an earlier adjournment. So soon, however, as the proposal was made, the Judge eagerly availed himself of it, and the trio prepared to depart. Mrs. Hollister attended them to the door in person, cautioning her guests as to the safest manner of leaving her premises.

"Lane on Mister Jones, Major," said she "he's young and will be a support to ye. Well, it's a charming sight to see ye, anyway, at the Bould Dragoon; and sure it's no harm to be kaping a Christmas eve wid a light heart, for it's no telling when we may have sorrow come upon us. So good-night, Joodge, and a merry Christmas to ye all tomorrow morning."

The gentlemen made their adieus as well as they could, and taking the middle of the road, which was a fine, wide, and well-beaten path, they did tolerably well until they reached the gate of the mansion-house: but on entering the Judge's domains they encountered some slight difficulties. We shall not stop to relate them, but will just mention that in the morning sundry diverging paths were to be seen in the snow; and that once during their progress to the door, Marmaduke, missing his companions, was enabled to trace them by one of these paths to a spot where he discovered them with nothing visible but their heads, Richard singing in a most vivacious strain:

"Come, let us be jolly, And cast away folly, For grief turns a black head to gray."

## CHAPTER XV.

"As she lay, on that day, in the Bay of Biscay, O!"

Previously to the occurrence of the scene at the "Bold Dragoon," Elizabeth had been safely reconducted to the mansion-house, where she was left as its mistress, either to amuse or employ herself during the evening as best suited her own inclinations. Most of the lights were extinguished; but as Benjamin adjusted with great care and regularity four large candles, in as many massive candlesticks of brass, in a row on the sideboard, the hall possessed a peculiar air of comfort and warmth, contrasted with the cheerless aspect of the room she had left in the academy.

Remarkable had been one of the listeners to Mr. Grant, and returned with her resentment, which had been not a little excited by the language of the Judge, somewhat softened by reflection and the worship. She recollected the youth of Elizabeth, and thought it no difficult task, under present appearances, to exercise that power indirectly which hitherto she had enjoyed undisputed. The idea of being governed, or of being compelled to pay the deference of servitude, was absolutely intolerable; and she had already determined within herself, some half dozen times, to make an effort that should at once bring to an issue the delicate point of her domestic condition. But as often as she met the dark, proud eye of Elizabeth, who was walking up and down the apartment, musing on the scenes of her youth and the change in her condition, and perhaps the events of the day, the housekeeper experienced an awe that she would not own to herself could be excited by anything mortal. It, however, checked her advances, and for some time held her tongue-tied. At length she determined to commence the discourse by entering on a subject that was apt to level all human distinctions, and in which she might display her own abilities.

"It was quite a wordy sermon that Parson Grant gave us to-night," said Remarkable. "The church ministers be commonly smart sermonizers, but they write down their ideas, which is a great privilege. I don't think that, by nater, they are as tonguey speakers, for an off-hand discourse, as the standing-order ministers."

"And what denomination do you distinguish as the standing-order?" inquired Miss Temple, with some surprise.

"Why, the Presbyter'ans and Congregational, and Baptists, too, for-til' now; and all sitch as don't go on their knees to prayer."

"By that rule, then, you would call those who belong' to the persuasion of my father, the sitting-order," observed Elizabeth. "I'm sure I've never heard 'em spoken of by any other' name than Quakers, so called," returned Remarkable, betraying a slight uneasiness; "I should be the last to call them otherwise, for I never in my life used a disparaging' tarm of the Judge, or any of his family. I've always set store by the Quakers, they are so pretty-spoken, clever people, and it's a wonderment to me how your father come to marry into a church family; for they are as contrary in religion as can be. One sits still, and, for the most part; says nothing, while the church folks practyse all kinds of ways, so that I sometimes think it quite moosical to see them; for I went to a church-meeting once before, down country."

"You have found an excellence in the church liturgy that has hitherto escaped me. I will thank you to inquire whether the fire in my room burns; I feel fatigued with my journey, and will retire."

Remarkable felt a wonderful inclination to tell the young mistress of the mansion that by opening a door she might see for herself; but prudence got the better of resentment, and after pausing some little time, as a salve to her dignity, she did as desired. The report was favorable, and the young lady, wishing Benjamin, who was filling the stove with wood, and the housekeeper, each a good-night, withdrew.

The instant the door closed on Miss Temple, Remarkable commenced a sort of mysterious, ambiguous discourse, that was neither abusive nor commendatory of the qualities of the absent personage, but which seemed to be drawing nigh, by regular degrees, to a most dissatisfied description. The major-domo made no reply, but continued his occupation with great industry, which being happily completed, he took a look at the thermometer, and then opening a drawer of the sideboard, he produced a supply of stimulants that would have served to keep the warmth in his system without the aid of the enormous fire he had been building. A small stand was drawn up near the stove, and the bottles and the glasses necessary for convenience were quietly arranged. Two chairs were placed by the side of this comfortable situation, when Benjamin, for the first time, appeared to observe his companion.

"Come," he cried, "come, Mistress Remarkable, bring yourself to an anchor on this chair. It's a peeler without, I can tell you, good woman; but what cares I? blow high or blow low, d'ye see, it's all the same thing to Ben. The niggers are snug stowed below before a fire that would roast an ox whole. The thermometer stands now at fifty-five, but if there's any vartue in good maple wood, I'll weather upon it, before one glass, as much as ten points more, so that the squire, when he comes home from Betty Hollister's warm room, will feel as hot as a hand that has given the rigging a lick with bad tar. Come, mistress, bring up in this here chair, and tell me how you like our new heirsch."

"Why, to my notion, Mr. Penguillum——"

"Pump, Pump," interrupted Benjamin; "it's Christmas eve, Mistress Remarkable, and so, dye see, you had better call me Pump. It's a shorter name, and as I mean to pump this here decanter till it sucks, why, you may as well call me Pump."

"Did you ever!" cried Remarkable, with a laugh that seemed to unhinge every joint in her body. "You're a moosical creature, Benjamin, when the notion takes you. But, as I was saying, I rather guess that times will be altered now in this house."

"Altered!" exclaimed the major-domo, eyeing the bottle, that was assuming the clear aspect of cut glass with astonishing rapidity; "it don't matter much, Mistress Remarkable, so long as I keep the keys of the lockers in my pocket."

"I can't say," continued the housekeeper, "but there's good eatables and drinkables enough in the house for a body's content—a little more sugar, Benjamin, in the glass—for Squire Jones is an excellent provider. But new lords, new laws; and I shouldn't wonder if you and I had an unsartain time on't in footer."

"Life is as unsartain as the wind that blows," said Benjamin, with a moralizing air; "and nothing is more varible than the wind, Mistress Remarkable, unless you hap pen to fall in with the trades, d'ye see, and then you may run for the matter of a month at a time, with studding-sails on both sides, alow and aloft, and with the cabin-boy at the wheel."

"I know that life is disp'ut unsartain," said Remark able, compressing her features to the humor of her companion; "but I expect there will be great changes made in the house to rights; and that you will find a young man put over your head, as there is one that wants to be over mine; and after having been settled as long as you have, Benjamin, I should judge that to be hard."

"Promotion should go according to length of sarvice," said the major-domo; "and if-so-be that they ship a hand for my berth, or place a new steward aft, I shall throw up my commission in less time than you can put a pilot-boat in stays. The Squire Dickon"—this was a common misnomer with Benjamin—"is a nice gentleman, and as good a man to sail with as heart could wish, yet I shall tel the squire, d'ye see, in plain English, and that's my native tongue, that if-so-be he is thinking of putting any Johnny Raw over my head, why, I shall resign. I began forrard, Mistress Prettybones, and worked my way aft, like a man. I was six months aboard a Garnsey lugger, hauling in the slack of the lee-sheet and coiling up rigging. From that I went a few trips in a fore-and-after, in the same trade, which, after all, was but a blind kind of sailing in the dark, where a man larns but little, excepting how to steer by the stars. Well, then, d'ye see, I larnt how a topmast should be slushed, and how a topgallant-sail was to be becketted; and then I did small jobs in the cabin, such as mixing the skipper's grog. 'Twas there I got my taste, which, you must have often seen, is excel lent. Well, here's better acquaintance to us." Remarkable nodded a return to the compliment, and took a sip of the beverage before her; for, provided it was well sweetened, she had no objection to a small potation now and then. After this observance of courtesy between the worthy couple, the dialogue proceeded.

"You have had great experiences in life, Benjamin; for, as the Scriptor says, 'They that go down to the sea in ships see the works of the Lord.'"

"Ay! for that matter, they in brigs and schooners, too; and it mought say, the works of the devil. The sea, Mistress Remarkable, is a great advantage to a man, in the way of knowledge, for he sees the fashions of nations and the shape of a country. Now, I suppose, for myself here, who is but an unlearned man to some that follows the seas, I suppose that, taking the coast from Cape Ler Hogue as low down as Cape Finish-there, there isn't so much as a headland, or an island, that I don't know either the name of it or something more or less about it. Take enough, woman, to color the water. Here's sugar. It's a sweet tooth, that fellow that you hold on upon yet, Mistress Prettybones. But, as I was saying, take the whole coast along, I know it as well as the way from here to the Bold Dragon; and a devil of acquaintance is that Bay of Biscay. Whew! I wish you could but hear the wind blow there. It sometimes takes two to hold one man's hair on his head. Scudding through the bay is pretty much the same thing as travelling the roads in this country, up one side of a mountain and down the other."

"Do tell!" exclaimed Remarkable; "and does the sea run as high as mountains, Benjamin?"

"Well, I will tell; but first let's taste the grog. Hem! it's the right kind of stuff, I must say, that you keep in this country; but then you're so close aboard the West Indies, you make but a small run of it. By the Lord Harry, woman, if Garnsey only lay somewhere between Cape Hatteras and the bite of Logann, but you'd see rum cheap! As to the seas, they runs more in uppers in the Bay of Biscay, unless it may be in a sow-wester, when they tumble about quite handsomely; thof it's not in the narrow sea that you are to look for a swell; just go off the Western Islands, in a westerly blow, keeping the land on your larboard hand, with the ship's head to the south'ard, and bring to, under a close-reefed topsail; or, mayhap, a reefed foresail, with a fore-topmast-staysail and mizzen staysail to keep her up to the sea, if she will bear it; and ay there for the matter of two watches, if you want to see mountains. Why, good woman, I've been off there in the Boadishy frigate, when you could see nothing but some such matter as a piece of sky, mayhap, as big as the main sail; and then again, there was a hole under your lee-quarter big enough to hold the whole British navy."

"Oh! for massy's sake! and wa'n't you afeard, Benjamin? and how did you get off?"

"Afeard! who the devil do you think was to be frightened at a little salt water tumbling about his head? As for getting off, when we had enough of it, and had washed our decks down pretty well, we called all hands, for, d'ye see, the watch below was in their hammocks, all the same as if they were in one of your best bedrooms; and so we watched for a smooth time, clapt her helm hard a weather, let fall the foresail, and got the tack aboard; and so, when we got her afore it, I ask you, Mistress Prettybones, if she didn't walk? didn't she? I'm no liar, good woman, when I say that I saw that ship jump from the top of one sea to another, just like one of these squirrels that can fly jumps from tree to tree."

"What! clean out of the water?" exclaimed Remark able, lifting her two lank arms, with their bony hands spread in astonishment.

"It was no such easy matte: to get out of the water, good woman; for the spray flew so that you couldn't tell which was sea or which was cloud. So there we kept her afore it for the matter of two glasses. The first lieutenant he cun'd the ship himself, and there was four quarter masters at the wheel, besides the master with six fore-castle men in the gun-room at the relieving tackles. But then she behaved herself so well! Oh! she was a sweet ship, mistress! That one frigate was well worth more, to live in, than the best house in the island. If I was king of England I'd have her hauled up above Lon'on bridge, and fit her up for a palace; because why? if anybody can afford to live comfortably, his majesty can."

"Well! but, Benjamin," cried the listener, who was in an ecstasy of astonishment at this relation of the steward's dangers, "what did you do?"

"Do! why, we did our duty like hearty fellows. Now if the countrymen of Monnsheer Ler Quaw had been aboard of her, they would have just struck her ashore on some of them small islands; but we run along the land until we found her dead to leeward off the mountains of Pico, and dam'me if I know to this day how we got there—whether we jumped over the island or hauled round it; but

there we was, and there we lay, under easy sail, fore-reaching first upon one tack and then upon t'other, so as to poke her nose out now and then and take a look to wind'ard till the gale blew its pipe out."

"I wonder, now!" exclaimed Remarkable, to whom most of the terms used by Benjamin were perfectly unintelligible, but who had got a confused idea of a raging tempest. "It must be an awful life, that going to sea! and I don't feel astonishment that you are so affronted with the thoughts, of being forced to quit a comfortable home like this. Not that a body cares much for't, as there's more houses than one to live in. Why, when the Judge agreed with me to come and live with him, I'd no more notion of stopping any time than anything. I happened in just to see how the family did, about a week after Mrs. Temple died, thinking to be back home agin' night; but the family was in such a distressed way that I couldn't but stop awhile and help em on. I thought the situation a good one, seeing that I was an unmarried body, and they were so much in want of help; so I tarried."

"And a long time you've left your anchors down in the same place, mistress. I think yo' must find that the ship rides easy."

"How you talk, Benjamin! there's no believing a word you say. I must say that the Judge and Squire Jones have both acted quite clever, so long; but I see that now we shall have a specimen to the contrary. I heern say thats the Judge was gone a great 'broad, and that he meant to bring his darter hum, but I didn't calculate on sich carrins on. To my notion, Benjamin, she's likely to turn out a desp'ut ugly gal."

"Ugly!" echoed the major-domo, opening eyes that were beginning to close in a very suspicious sleepiness, in wide amazement. "By the Lord Harry, woman, I should as soon think of calling the Boadishy a clumsy frigate. What the devil would you have? Arn't her eyes as bright as the morning and evening stars? and isn't her hair as black and glistening as rigging that has just had a lick of tar? doesn't she move as stately as a first-rate in smooth water, on a bowline? Why, woman, the figure-head of the Boadishy was a fool to her, and that, as I've often heard the captain say, was an image of a great queen; and arn't queens always comely, woman? for who do you think would be a king, and not choose a handsome bedfellow?"

"Talk decent, Benjamin," said the housekeeper, "Or I won't keep your company. I don't gainsay her being comely to look on, but I will maintain that she's likely to show poor conduct. She seems to think herself too good to talk to a body. From what Squire Jones had telled me, I some expected to be quite captivated by her company. Now, to my reckoning, Lowizy Grant is much more pritty behaved than Betsey Temple. She wouldn't so much as hold discourse with me when I wanted to ask her how she felt on coming home and missing her mammy."

"Perhaps she didn't understand you, woman; you are none of the best linguister; and then Miss Lizzy has been exercising the king's English under a great Lon'on lady, and, for that matter, can talk the language almost as well as myself, or any native-born British subject. You've forgot your schooling, and the young mistress is a great scollard."

"Mistress!" cried Remarkable; "don't make one out to be a nigger, Benjamin. She's no mistress of mine, and never will be. And as to speech, I hold myself as second to nobody out of New England. I was born and raised in Essex County; and I've always heern say that the Bay State was provarb for pronounsation!"

"I've often heard of that Bay of State," said Benjamin, "but can't say that I've ever been in it, nor do I know exactly whereaway it is that it lays; but I suppose there is good anchorage in it, and that it's no bad place for the taking of ling; but for size it can't be so much as a yawl to a sloop of war compared with the Bay of Biscay, or, mayhap, Torbay. And as for language, if you want to hear the dictionary overhauled like a log-line in a blow, you must go to Wapping and listen to the Lon'oners as they deal out their lingo. Howsomever, I see no such mighty matter that Miss Lizzy has been doing to you, good woman; so take another drop of your brews and forgive and forget, like an honest soul."

"No, indeed! and I shan't do sitch a thing, Benjamin. This treatment is a newity to me, and what I won't put up with. I have a hundred and fifty dollars at use, besides a bed and twenty sheep, to good; and I don't crave to live in a house where a body mustn't call a young woman by her given name to her face. I will call her Betsey as much as I please; it's a free country, and no one can stop me. I did intend to stop while summer, but I shall quit to-morrow morning; and I will talk just as I please."

"For that matter, Mistress Remarkable," said Benjamin, "there's none here who will contradict you; for I'm of opinion that it would be as easy to stop a hurricane with a Barcelony handkerchy as to bring up your tongue when the stopper is off. I say, good woman, do they grow many monkeys along the shores of that Bay of State?"

"You're a monkey yourself, Mr. Penguillum," cried the enraged housekeeper, "or a bear—a black, beastly bear! and ain't fit for a decent woman to stay with. I'll never, keep your company agin, sir, if I should live thirty years with the Judge. Sitch talk is more befitting the kitchen than the keeping-room of a house of one who is well-to-do in the world."

"Look you, Mistress Pitty—Patty——Prettybones, mayhap I'm some such matter as a bear, as they will find who come to grapple with me; but dam'me if I'm a monkey—a thing that chatters without knowing a word of what it says—a parrot; that will hold a dialogue, for what an honest man knows, in a dozen languages; mayhap in the Bay of State lingo; mayhap in Greek or High Dutch. But dost it know what it means itself? canst answer me that, good woman? Your midshipman can sing out, and pass the word, when the captain gives the order, but just send him adrift by himself, and let him work the ship of his own head, and stop my grog if you don't find all the Johnny Raws laughing at him."

"Stop your grog, indeed!" said Remarkable, rising with great indignation, and seizing a candle; "you're groggy now, Benjamin and I'll quit the room before I hear any misbecoming words from you." The housekeeper retired, with a manner but little less dignified, as she thought, than the air of the heiress, muttering as she drew the door after her, with a noise like the report of a musket, the opprobrious terms of "drunkard," "sot," and "beast."

"Who's that you say is drunk?" cried Benjamin fiercely, rising and making a movement toward Remarkable. "You talk of mustering yourself with a lady you're just fit to grumble and find fault. Where the devil should you larn behavior and dictionary? in your damned Bay of State, ha?"

Benjamin here fell back in his chair, and soon gave vent to certain ominous sounds, which resembled not a little the growling of his

favorite animal the bear itself. Be fore, however, he was quite locked—to use the language that would suit the Della-cruscan humor of certain refined minds of the present day—“in the arms of Morpheus,” he spoke aloud, observing due pauses between his epithets, the impressive terms of “monkey,” “parrot,” “picnic,” “tar pot,” and “linguisters”

We shall not attempt to explain his meaning nor connect his sentences; and our readers must be satisfied with our informing them that they were expressed with all that coolness of contempt that a man might well be supposed to feel for a monkey.

Nearly two hours passed in this sleep before the major domo was awakened by the noisy entrance of Richard, Major Hartmann, and the master of the mansion. Benjamin so far rallied his confused faculties as to shape the course of the two former to their respective apartments, when he disappeared himself, leaving the task of securing the house to him who was most interested in its safety. Locks and bars were but little attended to in the early days of that settlement, and so soon as Marmaduke had given an eye to the enormous fires of his dwelling he retired. With this act of prudence closes the first night of our tale.

## CHAPTER XVI

"Watch (aside).  
Some treason, masters—  
Yet stand close."  
—Much Ado About Nothing.

It was fortunate for more than one of the bacchanalians who left the "Bold Dragoon" late in the evening that the severe cold of the season was becoming rapidly less dangerous as they threaded the different mazes through the snow-banks that led to their respective dwellings. Then driving clouds began toward morning to flit across the heavens, and the moon set behind a volume of vapor that was impelled furiously toward the north, carrying with it the softer atmosphere from the distant ocean. The rising sun was obscured by denser and increasing columns of clouds, while the southerly wind that rushed up the valley brought the never-failing symptoms of a thaw.

It was quite late in the morning before Elizabeth, observing the faint glow which appeared on the eastern mountain long after the light of the sun had struck the opposite hills, ventured from the house, with a view to gratify her curiosity with a glance by daylight at the surrounding objects before the tardy revellers of the Christmas eve should make their appearance at the breakfast-table. While she was drawing the folds of her pelisse more closely around her form, to guard against a cold that was yet great though rapidly yielding, in the small inclosure that opened in the rear of the house on a little thicket of low pines that were springing up where trees of a mightier growth had lately stood, she was surprised at the voice of Mr. Jones.

"Merry Christmas, merry Christmas to you, Cousin Bess," he shouted. "Ah, ha! an early riser, I see; but I knew I should steal a march on you. I never was in a house yet where I didn't get the first Christmas greeting on every soul in it, man, woman, and child—great and small—black, white, and yellow. But stop a minute till I can just slip on my coat. You are about to look at the improvements, I see, which no one can explain so well as I, who planned them all. It will be an hour before 'Duke and the Major can sleep off Mrs. Hollister's confounded distillations, and so I'll come down and go with you."

Elizabeth turned and observed her cousin in his night cap, with his head out of his bedroom window, where his zeal for pre-eminence, in defiance of the weather, had impelled him to thrust it. She laughed, and promising to wait for his company re-entered the house, making her appearance again, holding in her hand a packet that was secured by several large and important seals, just in time to meet the gentleman.

"Come, Bessy, come," he cried, drawing one of her arms through his own; "the snow begins to give, but it will bear us yet. Don't you snuff old Pennsylvania in the very air? This is a vile climate, girl; now at sunset, last evening, it was cold enough to freeze a man's zeal, and that, I can tell you, takes a thermometer near zero for me; then about nine or ten it began to moderate; at twelve it was quite mild, and here all the rest of the night I have been so hot as not to bear a blanket on the bed.—Holla! Aggy—merry Christmas, Aggy—I say, do you hear me, you black dog! there's a dollar for you; and if the gentle men get up before I come back, do you come out and let me know. I wouldn't have 'Duke get the start of me for the worth of your head."

The black caught the money from the snow, and promising a due degree of watchfulness, he gave the dollar a whirl of twenty feet in the air, and catching it as it fell in the palm of his hand, he withdrew to the kitchen, to exhibit his present, with a heart as light as his face was happy in its expression.

"Oh, rest easy, my dear coz," said the young lady; "I took a look in at my father, who is likely to sleep an hour; and by using due vigilance you will secure all the honors of the season."

"Why, Duke is your father, Elizabeth; but 'Duke is a man who likes to be foremost, even in trifles. Now, as for myself, I care for no such things, except in the way of competition; for a thing which is of no moment in itself may be made of importance in the way of competition. So it is with your father—he loves to be first; but I only; struggle with him as a competitor."

"It's all very clear, sir," said Elizabeth; "you would not care a fig for distinction if there were no one in the world but yourself; but as there happens to be a great many others, why, you must struggle with them all—in the way of competition."

"Exactly so; I see you are a clever girl, Bess, and one who does credit to her masters. It was my plan to send you to that school; for when your father first mentioned the thing, I wrote a private letter for advice to a judicious friend in the city, who recommended the very school you went to. 'Duke was a little obstinate at first, as usual, but when he heard the truth he was obliged to send you."

"Well, a truce to 'Duke's foibles, sir; he is my father, and if you knew what he has been doing for you while we were in Albany, you would deal more tenderly with his character."

"For me!" cried Richard, pausing a moment in his walk to reflect. "Oh! he got the plans of the new Dutch meeting-house for me, I suppose; but I care very little about it, for a man of a certain kind of talent is seldom aided by any foreign suggestions; his own brain is the best architect."

"No such thing," said Elizabeth, looking provokingly knowing.

"No! let me see—perhaps he had my name put in the bill for the new turnpike, as a director."

"He might possibly; but it is not to such an appointment that I allude."

"Such an appointment!" repeated Mr. Jones, who began to fidget with curiosity; "then it is an appointment. If it is in the militia, I won't take it.

"No, no, it is not in the militia," cried Elizabeth, showing the packet in her hand, and then drawing it back with a coquettish air; "it is an office of both honor and emolument."

"Honor and emolument!" echoed Richard, in painful suspense; "show me the paper, girl. Say, is it an office where there is anything to do?"

"You have hit it, Cousin Dickon; it is the executive office of the county; at least so said my father when he gave me this packet to offer you as a Christmas-box. Surely, if anything will please Dickon," he said, "it will be to fill the executive chair of the county."

"Executive chair! what nonsense!" cried the impatient gentleman, snatching the packet from her hand; "there is no such office in the county. Eh! what! it is, I declare, a commission, appointing Richard Jones, Esquire, sheriff of the county. Well, this is kind in 'Duke, positively. I must say 'Duke has a warm heart, and never forgets his friends. Sheriff! High Sheriff of—! it sounds well, Bess, but it shall execute better. 'Duke is a judicious man after all, and knows human nature thoroughly, I'm much obliged to him," continued Richard, using the skirt of his coat unconsciously to wipe his eyes; "though I would do as much for him any day, as he shall see, if I have an opportunity to perform any of the duties of my office on him. It shall be done, Cousin Bess—it shall be done, I say. How this cursed south wind makes one's eyes water!"

"Now, Richard," said the laughing maiden, "now I think you will find something to do. I have often heard you complain of old that there was nothing to do in this new country, while to my eyes it seemed as if everything remained to be done."

"Do!" echoed Richard, who blew his nose, raised his little form to its greatest elevation, and looked serious. "Everything depends on system, girl. I shall sit down this afternoon and systematize the county. I must have deputies, you know. I will divide the county into districts, over which I will place my deputies; and I will have one for the village, which I will call my home department. Let me see—ho! Benjamin! yes, Benjamin will make a good deputy; he has been naturalized, and would answer admirably if he could only ride on horseback."

"Yes, Mr. Sheriff," said his companion; "and as he understands ropes so well, he would be very expert, should occasion happen for his services in another way."

"No," interrupted the other; "I flatter myself that no man could hang a man better than—that is—ha!—oh! yes, Benjamin would do extremely well in such an unfortunate dilemma, if he could be persuaded to attempt it. But I should despair of the thing. I never could induce him to hang, or teach him to ride on horseback. I must seek another deputy."

"Well, sir, as you have abundant leisure for all these important affairs, I beg that you will forget that you are high sheriff, and devote some little of your time to gallantry. Where are the beauties and improvements which you were to show me?"

"Where? why, everywhere! Here I have laid out some new streets; and when they are opened, and the trees felled, and they are all built up, will they not make a fine town? Well, 'Duke is a liberal-hearted fellow, with all his stubbornness. Yes, yes; I must have at least four deputies, besides a jailer."

"I see no streets in the direction of our walk," said Elizabeth, "unless you call the short avenues through these pine bushes by that name. Surely you do not contemplate building houses, very soon, in that forest before us, and in those swamps."

"We must run our streets by the compass, coz, and disregard trees, hills, ponds, stumps, or, in fact, anything but posterity. Such is the will of your father, and your father, you know——"

"Had you made sheriff, Mr. Jones," interrupted the lady, with a tone that said very plainly to the gentleman that he was touching a forbidden subject.

"I know it, I know it," cried Richard; "and if it were in my power, I'd make 'Duke a king. He is a noble hearted fellow, and would make an excellent king; that is, if he had a good prime minister. But who have we here? voices in the bushes—a combination about mischief, I'll wager my commission. Let us draw near and examine a little into the matter."

During this dialogue, as the parties had kept in motion, Richard and his cousin advanced some distance from the house into the open space in the rear of the village, where, as may be gathered from the conversation, streets were planned and future dwellings contemplated; but where, in truth, the only mark of improvement that was to be seen was a neglected clearing along the skirt of a dark forest of mighty pines, over which the bushes or sprouts of the same tree had sprung up to a height that interspersed the fields of snow with little thickets of evergreen. The rushing of the wind, as it whistled through the tops of these mimic trees, prevented the footsteps of the pair from being heard, while the branches concealed their persons. Thus aided, the listeners drew nigh to a spot where the young hunter, Leather-Stocking, and the Indian chief were collected in an earnest consultation. The former was urgent in his manner, and seemed to think the subject of deep importance, while Natty appeared to listen with more than his usual attention to what the other was saying. Mohegan stood a little on one side, with his head sunken on his chest, his hair falling forward so as to conceal most of his features, and his whole attitude expressive of deep dejection, if not of shame. "Let us withdraw," whispered Elizabeth; "we are intruders, and can have no right to listen to the secrets of these men."

"No right!" returned Richard a little impatiently, in the same tone, and drawing her arm so forcibly through his own as to prevent her retreat; "you forget, cousin, that it is my duty to preserve the peace of the county and see the laws executed, these wanderers frequently commit depredations, though I do not think John would do anything secretly. Poor fellow! he was quite boozy last night, and hardly seems to be over it yet. Let us draw nigher and hear what they say."

Notwithstanding the lady's reluctance, Richard, stimulated doubtless by his sense of duty, prevailed; and they were soon so near as distinctly to hear sounds.

"The bird must be had," said Natty, "by fair means or foul. Heigho! I've known the time, lad, when the wild turkeys wasn't over-scarce in the country; though you must go into the Virginia gaps if you want them now. 'to be sure, there is a different taste to a partridge and a well-fatted turkey; though, to my eating, beaver's tail and bear's ham make the best of food. But then every one has his own appetite. I gave the last farthing, all to that shilling, to the French trader, this very morning, as I came through the town, for powder; so, as you have nothing, we can have but one shot for it. I know that Billy Kirby is out, and means to have a pull of the trigger at that very turkey. John has a true eye for a single fire, and, some how, my hand shakes so whenever I have to do anything extraneous,



that I often lose my aim. Now, when I killed the she-bear this fall, with her cubs, though they were so mighty ravenous, I knocked them over one at a shot, and loaded while I dodged the trees in the bargain; but this is a very different thing, Mr. Oliver."

"This," cried the young man, with an accent that sounded as if he took a bitter pleasure in his poverty, while he held a shilling up before his eyes, "this is all the treasure that I possess—this and my rifle! Now, indeed, I have become a man of the woods, and must place my sole dependence on the chase. Come, Natty, let us stake the last penny for the bird; with your aim, it cannot fail to be successful."

"I would rather it should be John, lad; my heart jumps into my mouth, because you set your mind so much out; and I'm sartin that I shall miss the bird. Them Indians can shoot one time as well as another; nothing ever troubles them. I say, John, here's a shilling; take my rifle, and get a shot at the big turkey they've put up at the stump. Mr. Oliver is over-anxious for the creatur', and I'm sure to do nothing when I have over-anxiety about it."

The Indian turned his head gloomily, and after looking keenly for a moment, in profound silence, at his companions, he replied:

"When John was young, eyesight was not straighter than his bullet. The Mingo squaws cried out at the sound of his rifle. The Mingo warriors were made squaws. When did he ever shoot twice? The eagle went above the clouds when he passed the wigwam of Chingachgook; his feathers were plenty with the women. But see," he said, raising his voice from the low, mournful tones in which he had spoken to a pitch of keen excitement, and stretching forth both hands, "they shake like a deer at the wolf's howl. Is John old? When was a Mohican a squaw with seventy winters? No! the white man brings old age with him—rum is his tomahawk!"

"Why, then, do you use it, old man?" exclaimed the young hunter; "why will one, so noble by nature, aid the devices of the devil by making himself a beast?"

"Beast! is John a beast?" replied the Indian slowly; "yes; you say no lie, child of the Fire-eater! John is a beast. The smokes were once few in these hills, The deer would lick the hand of a white man and the birds rest on his head. They were strangers to him. My fathers came from the shores of the salt lake. They fled before rum. They came to their grandfather, and they lived in peace; or, when they did raise the hatchet, it was to strike it into the brain of a Mingo. They gathered around the council fire, and what they said was done. Then John was a man. But warriors and traders with light eyes followed them. One brought the long knife and one brought rum. They were more than the pines on the mountains; and they broke up the councils and took the lands, The evil spirit was in their jugs, and they let him loose. Yes yes—you say no lie, Young Eagle; John is a Christian beast."

"Forgive me, old warrior," cried the youth, grasping his hand; "I should be the last to reproach you. The curses of Heaven light on the cupidity that has destroyed such a race. Remember, John, that I am of your family, and it is now my greatest pride."

The muscles of Mohegan relaxed a little, and he said, more mildly:

"You are a Delaware, my son; your words are not heard—John cannot shoot."

"I thought that lad had Indian blood in him," whispered Richard, "by the awkward way he handled my horses last night. You see, coz, they never use harness. But the poor fellow shall have two shots at the turkey, if he wants it, for I'll give him another shilling myself; though, per haps, I had better offer to shoot for him. They have got up their Christmas sports, I find, in the bushes yonder, where you hear the laughter—though it is a queer taste this chap has for turkey; not but what it is good eating, too."

"Hold, Cousin Richard," exclaimed Elizabeth, clinging to his arm; "would it be delicate to offer a shilling to that gentleman?"

"Gentleman, again! Do you think a half-breed, like him, will refuse money? No, no, girl, he will take the shilling; ay! and even rum too, notwithstanding he moralizes so much about it, But I'll give the lad a chance for his turkey; for that Billy Kirby is one of the best marksmen in the country; that is, if we except the—the gentleman."

"Then," said Elizabeth, who found her strength unequal to her will, "then, sir, I will speak." She advanced, with an air of determination, in front of her cousin, and entered the little circle of bushes that surrounded the trio of hunters. Her appearance startled the youth, who at first made an unequivocal motion toward retiring, but, recollecting himself, bowed, by lifting his cap, and resumed his attitude of leaning on his rifle. Neither Natty nor Mohegan betrayed any emotion, though the appearance of Elizabeth was so entirely unexpected.

"I find," she said, "that the old Christmas sport of shooting the turkey is yet in use among you. I feel inclined to try my chance for a bird. Which of you will take this money, and, after paying my fee, give me the aid of his rifle?"

"Is this a sport for a lady?" exclaimed the young hunter, with an emphasis that could not well be mistaken, and with a rapidity that showed he spoke without consulting anything but feeling. "Why not, sir? If it be inhuman the sin is not confined to one sex only. But I have my humor as well as others. I ask not your assistance, but"—turning to Natty, and dropping a dollar in his hand—"this old veteran of the forest will not be so ungallant as to refuse one fire for a lady."

Leather-Stocking dropped the money into his pouch, and throwing up the end of his rifle he freshened his priming; and first laughing in his usual manner, he threw the piece over his shoulder, and said:

"If Billy Kirby don't get the bird before me, and the Frenchman's powder don't hang fire this damp morning, you'll see as fine a turkey dead, in a few minutes, as ever was eaten in the Judge's shanty. I have knowed the Dutch women, on the Mohawk and Schoharie, count greatly on coming to the merry-makings; and so, lad, you shouldn't be short with the lady. Come, let us go forward, for if we wait the finest bird will be gone."

"But I have a right before you, Natty, and shall try on my own luck first. You will excuse me, Miss Temple; I have much reason to wish that bird, and may seem ungallant, but I must claim my privileges."

"Claim anything that is justly your own, sir," returned the lady; "we are both adventurers; and this is my knight. I trust my fortune to his hand and eye. Lead on, Sir Leather-Stocking, and we will follow."

Natty, who seemed pleased with the frank address of the young and beauteous Elizabeth, who had so singularly intrusted him with such a commission, returned the bright smile with which she had addressed him, by his own peculiar mark of mirth, and moved across

the snow toward the spot whence the sounds of boisterous mirth proceeded, with the long strides of a hunter. His companions followed in silence, the youth casting frequent and uneasy glances toward Elizabeth, who was detained by a motion from Richard.

"I should think, Miss Temple," he said, so soon as the others were out of hearing, "that if you really wished a turkey, you would not have taken a stranger for the office, and such a one as Leather-Stocking. But I can hardly believe that you are serious, for I have fifty, at this moment, shut up in the coops, in every stage of fat, so that you might choose any quality you pleased. There are six that I am trying an experiment on, by giving them brick-bats with—"

"Enough, Cousin Dickon," interrupted the lady; "I do wish the bird, and it is because I so wish that I commissioned this Mr. Leather-Stocking."

"Did you ever hear of the great shot that I made at the wolf, Cousin Elizabeth, who was carrying off your father's sheep?" said Richard, drawing himself up with an air of displeasure. "He had the sheep on his hack; and, had the head of the wolf been on the other side, I should have killed him dead; as it was—"

"You killed the sheep—I know it all, dear coz. But would it have been decorous for the High Sheriff of—to mingle in such sports as these?" "Surely you did not think that I intended actually to fire with my own hands?" said Mr. Jones. "But let us follow, and see the shooting. There is no fear of anything unpleasant occurring to a female in this new country, especially to your father's daughter, and in my presence."

"My father's daughter fears nothing, sir, more especially when escorted by the highest executive officer in the county."

She took his arm, and he led her through the mazes of the bushes to the spot where most of the young men of the village were collected for the sports of shooting a Christmas match, and whither Natty and his Companions had already preceded them.

## CHAPTER XVII

"I guess, by all this quaint array,  
The burghers hold their sports to-day."  
—Scott.

The ancient amusement of shooting the Christmas turkey is one of the few sports that the settlers of a new country seldom or never neglect to observe. It was connected with the daily practices of a people who often laid aside the axe or the scythe to seize the rifle, as the deer glided through the forests they were felling, or the bear entered their rough meadows to scent the air of a clearing, and to scan, with a look of sagacity, the progress of the invader.

On the present occasion, the usual amusement of the day had been a little hastened, in order to allow a fair opportunity to Mr. Grant, whose exhibition was not less a treat to the young sportsmen than the one which engaged their present attention. The owner of the birds was a free black, who had prepared for the occasion a collection of game that was admirably qualified to inflame the appetite of an epicure, and was well adapted to the means and skill of the different competitors, who were of all ages. He had offered to the younger and more humble marks men divers birds of an inferior quality, and some shooting had already taken place, much to the pecuniary advantage of the sable owner of the game. The order of the sports was extremely simple, and well understood. The bird was fastened by a string to the stump of a large pine, the side of which, toward the point where the marksmen were placed, had been flattened with an axe, in order that it might serve the purpose of a target, by which the merit of each individual might be ascertained. The distance between the stump and shooting-stand was one hundred measured yards; a foot more or a foot less being thought an invasion of the right of one of the parties. The negro affixed his own price to every bird, and the terms of the chance; but, when these were once established, he was obliged, by the strict principles of public justice that prevailed in the country, to admit any adventurer who might offer.

The throng consisted of some twenty or thirty young men, most of whom had rifles, and a collection of all the boys in the village. The little urchins, clad in coarse but warm garments, stood gathered around the more distinguished marksmen, with their hands stuck under their waistbands, listening eagerly to the boastful stories of skill that had been exhibited on former occasions, and were already emulating in their hearts these wonderful deeds in gunnery.

The chief speaker was the man who had been mentioned by Natty as Billy Kirby. This fellow, whose occupation, when he did labor, was that of clearing lands, or chopping jobs, was of great stature, and carried in his very air the index of his character. He was a noisy, boisterous, reckless lad, whose good-natured eye contradicted the bluntness and bullying tenor of his speech. For weeks he would lounge around the taverns of the county, in a state of perfect idleness, or doing small jobs for his liquor and his meals, and cavilling with applicants about the prices of his labor; frequently preferring idleness to an abatement of a little of his independence, or a cent in his wages. But, when these embarrassing points were satisfactorily arranged, he would shoulder his axe and his rifle, slip his arms through the straps of his pack, and enter the woods with the tread of a Hercules. His first object was to learn his limits, round which he would pace, occasionally freshening, with a blow of his axe, the marks on the boundary trees; and then he would proceed, with an air of great deliberation, to the centre of his premises, and, throwing aside his superfluous garments, measure, with a knowing eye, one or two of the nearest trees that were towering apparently into the very clouds as he gazed upward. Commonly selecting one of the most noble for the first trial of his power, he would approach it with a listless air, whistling a low tune; and wielding his axe with a certain flourish, not unlike the salutes of a fencing-master, he would strike a light blow into the bark, and measure his distance. The pause that followed was ominous of the fall of the forest which had flourished there for centuries. The heavy and brisk blows that he struck were soon succeeded by the thundering report of the tree, as it came, first cracking and threatening with the separation of its own last ligaments, then threshing and tearing with its branches the tops of its surrounding brethren, and finally meeting the ground with a shock but little inferior to an earthquake. From that moment the sounds of the axe were ceaseless, while the falling of the trees was like a distant cannonading; and the daylight broke into the depths of the woods with the suddenness of a winter morning.

For days, weeks, nay months, Billy Kirby would toil with an ardor that evinced his native spirit, and with an effect that seemed magical, until, his chopping being ended, his stentorian lungs could be heard emitting sounds, as he called to his patient oxen, which rang through the hills like the cries of an alarm. He had been often heard, on a mild summer' evening, a long mile across the vale of Templeton; when the echoes from the mountains would take up his cries, until they died away in the feeble sounds from the distant rocks that overhung the lake. His piles, or, to use the language of the country, his logging ended, with a dispatch that could only accompany his dexterity and herculean strength, the jobber would collect together his implements of labor, light the heaps of timber, and march away under the blaze of the prostrate forest, like the conqueror of some city who, having first prevailed over his adversary, applies the torch as the finishing blow to his conquest. For a long time Billy Kirby would then be seen sauntering around the taverns, the rider of scrub races, the bully of cock-fights, and not infrequently the hero of such sports as the one in hand.

Between him and the Leather-Stocking there had long existed a jealous rivalry on the point of skill with the rifle. Notwithstanding the long practice of Natty, it was commonly supposed that the steady nerves and the quick eye of the wood-chopper rendered him his equal. The competition had, however, been confined hitherto to boasting, and comparisons made from their success in various hunting excursions; but this was the first time they had ever come in open collision. A good deal of higgling about the price of the choicest bird had taken place between Billy Kirby and its owner before Natty and his companions rejoined the sportsmen. It had, however, been settled at one shilling \* a shot, which was the highest sum ever exacted, the black taking care to protect himself from losses, as much as possible, by the conditions of the sport.

\* Before the Revolution, each province had its own money of account though neither coined any but copper pieces. In New York the Spanish

dollar was divided into eight shillings, each of the value of a fraction more than sixpence sterling. At present the Union has provided a decimal system, with coins to represent it.

The turkey was already fastened at the "mark," but its body was entirely hid by the surrounding snow, nothing being visible but its red swelling head and its long neck. If the bird was injured by any bullet that struck below the snow, it was to continue the property of its present owner; but if a feather was touched in a visible part, the animal became the prize of the successful adventurer.

These terms were loudly proclaimed by the negro, who was seated in the snow, in a somewhat hazardous vicinity to his favorite bird, when Elizabeth and her cousin approached the noisy sportsmen. The sounds of mirth and contention sensibly lowered at this unexpected visit; but, after a moment's pause, the curious interest exhibited in the face of the young lady, together with her smiling air, restored the freedom of the morning; though it was somewhat chastened, both in language and vehemence, by the presence of such a spectator.

"Stand out of the way there, boys!" cried the wood-chopper, who was placing himself at the shooting-point—stand out of the way, you little rascals, or I will shoot through you. Now, Brom, take leave of your turkey.

"Stop!" cried the young hunter; "I am a candidate for a chance. Here is my shilling, Brom; I wish a shot too."

"You may wish it in welcome," cried Kirby, "but if I ruffle the gobbler's feathers, how are you to get it? Is money so plenty in your deer-skin pocket, that you pay for a chance that you may never have?"

"How know you, sir, how plenty money is in my pocket?" said the youth fiercely. "Here is my shilling, Brom, and I claim a right to shoot."

"Don't be crabbed, my boy," said the other, who was very coolly fixing his flint. "They say you have a hole in your left shoulder yourself, so I think Brom may give you a fire for half-price. It will take a keen one to hit that bird, I can tell you, my lad, even if I give you a chance, which is what I have no mind to do."

"Don't be boasting, Billy Kirby," said Natty, throwing the breech of his rifle into the snow, and leaning on its barrel; "you'll get but one shot at the creatur', for if the lad misses his aim, which wouldn't be a wonder if he did, with his arm so stiff and sore, you'll find a good piece and an old eye coming a'ter you. Maybe it's true that I can't shoot as I used to could, but a hundred yards is a short distance for a long rifle."

"What, old Leather-Stocking, are you out this morning?" cried his reckless opponent. "Well, fair play's a jewel. I've the lead of you, old fellow; so here goes for a dry throat or a good dinner."

The countenance of the negro evinced not only all the interest which his pecuniary adventure might occasion, but also the keen excitement that the sport produced in the others, though with a very different wish as to the result. While the wood-chopper was slowly and steadily raising his rifle, he bawled;

"Fair play, Billy Kirby—stand back—make 'em stand back, boys—gib a nigger fair play—poss-up,—gobbler; shake a head, fool; don't you see 'em taking aim?"

These cries, which were intended as much to distract the attention of the marksman as for anything else, were fruitless.

The nerves of the wood-chopper were not so easily shaken, and he took his aim with the utmost deliberation. Stillness prevailed for a moment, and he fired. The head of the turkey was seen to dash on one side, and its wings were spread in momentary fluttering; but it settled itself down calmly into its bed of snow, and glanced its eyes uneasily around. For a time long enough to draw a deep breath, not a sound was heard. The silence was then broken by the noise of the negro, who laughed, and shook his body with all kinds of antics, rolling over in the snow in the excess of delight.

"Well done, a gobbler," he cried, jumping up and affecting to embrace his bird; "I tell 'em to poss-up, and you see 'em dodge. Gib anoder shillin', Billy, and halb anoder shot."

"No—the shot is mine," said the young hunter; "you have my money already. Leave the mark, and let me try my luck."

"Ah! it's but money thrown away, lad," said Leather-Stocking. "A turkey's head and neck is but a small mark for a new hand and a lame shoulder. You'd best let me take the fire, and maybe we can make some settlement with the lady about the bird."

"The chance is mine," said the young hunter. "Clear the ground, that I may take it."

The discussions and disputes concerning the last shot were now abating, it having been determined that if the turkey's head had been anywhere but just where it was at that moment, the bird must certainly have been killed. There was not much excitement produced by the preparations of the youth, who proceeded in a hurried manner to take his aim, and was in the act of pulling the trigger, when he was stopped by Natty.

"Your hand shakes, lad," he said, "and you seem over eager. Bullet-wounds are apt to weaken flesh, and to my judgment you'll not shoot so well as in common. If you will fire, you should shoot quick, before there is time to shake off the aim."

"Fair play," again shouted the negro; "fair play—gib a nigger fair play. What right a Nat Bumpo advise a young man? Let 'em shoot—clear a ground."

The youth fired with great rapidity, but no motion was made by the turkey; and, when the examiners for the ball returned from the "mark," they declared that he had missed the stump.

Elizabeth observed the change in his countenance, and could not help feeling surprise that one so evidently superior to his companions should feel a trifling loss so sensibly. But her own champion was now preparing to enter the lists.

The mirth of Brom, which had been again excited, though in a much smaller degree than before, by the failure of the second adventurer, vanished the instant Natty took his stand. His skin became mottled with large brown spots, that fearfully sullied the lustre of his native ebony, while his enormous lips gradually compressed around two rows of ivory that had hitherto been shining in his visage like pearls set in jet. His nostrils, at all times the most conspicuous feature of his face, dilated until they covered the greater part

of the diameter of his countenance; while his brown and bony hands unconsciously grasped the snow-crust near him, the excitement of the moment completely overcoming his native dread of cold.

While these indications of apprehension were exhibited in the sable owner of the turkey, the man who gave rise to this extraordinary emotion was as calm and collected as if there was not to be a single spectator of his skill.

"I was down in the Dutch settlements on the Schoharie," said Natty, carefully removing the leather guard from the lock of his rifle, "just before the breaking out of the last war, and there was a shooting-match among the boys; so I took a hand. I think I opened a good many Dutch eyes that day; for I won the powder-horn, three bars of lead, and a pound of as good powder as ever flashed in pan. Lord! how they did swear in Jarman! They did tell me of one drunken Dutchman who said he'd have the life of me before I got back to the lake agin. But if he had put his rifle to his shoulder with evil intent God would have punished him for it; and even if the Lord didn't, and he had missed his aim, I know one that would have given him as good as he sent, and better too, if good shooting could come into the 'count." By this time the old hunter was ready for his business, and throwing his right leg far behind him, and stretching his left arm along the barrel of his piece, he raised it toward the bird. Every eye glanced rapidly from the marks man to the mark; but at the moment when each ear was expecting the report of the rifle, they were disappointed by the ticking sound of the flint.

"A snap, a snap!" shouted the negro, springing from his crouching posture like a madman, before his bird. "A snap good as fire—Natty Bumpo gun he snap—Natty Bumpo miss a turkey!"

"Natty Bumpo hit a nigger," said the indignant old hunter, "if you don't get out of the way, Brom. It's contrary to the reason of the thing, boy, that a snap should count for a fire, when one is nothing more than a fire-stone striking a steel pan, and the other is sudden death; so get out of my way, boy, and let me show Billy Kirby how to shoot a Christmas turkey."

"Gib a nigger fair play!" cried the black, who continued resolutely to maintain his post, and making that appeal to the justice of his auditors which the degraded condition of his caste so naturally suggested. "Eberybody know dat snap as good as fire. Leab it to Massa Jone—leab it to lady."

"Sartain," said the wood-chopper; "it's the law of the game in this part of the country, Leather-Stocking. If you fire agin you must pay up the other shilling. I b'lieve I'll try luck once more myself; so, Brom, here's my money, and I take the next fire."

"It's likely you know the laws of the woods better than I do, Billy Kirby," returned Natty. "You come in with the settlers, with an ox-goad in your hand, and I come in with moccasins on my feet, and with a good rifle on my shoulders, so long back as afore the old war. Which is likely to know the best? I say no man need tell me that snapping is as good as firing when I pull the trigger."

"Leab it to Massa Jone," said the alarmed negro; "he know eberyting." This appeal to the knowledge of Richard was too flattering to be unheeded. He therefore advanced a little from the spot whither the delicacy of Elizabeth had induced her to withdraw, and gave the following opinion, with the gravity that the subject and his own rank demanded:

"There seems to be a difference in opinion," he said, "on the subject of Nathaniel Bumpo's right to shoot at Abraham Freeborn's turkey without the said Nathaniel paying one shilling for the privilege." The fact was too evident to be denied, and after pausing a moment, that the audience might digest his premises, Richard proceeded: "It seems proper that I should decide this question, as I am bound to preserve the peace of the county; and men with deadly weapons in their hands should not be heedlessly left to contention and their own malignant passions. It appears that there was no agreement, either in writing or in words, on the disputed point; therefore we must reason from analogy, which is, as it were, comparing one thing with another. Now, in duels, where both parties shoot, it is generally the rule that a snap is a fire; and if such is the rule where the party has a right to fire back again, it seems to me unreasonable to say that a man may stand snapping at a defenceless turkey all day. I therefore am of the opinion that Nathaniel Bumpo has lost his chance, and must pay another shilling before he renews his right."

As this opinion came from so high a quarter, and was delivered with effect, it silenced all murmurs—for the whole of the spectators had begun to take sides with great warmth—except from the Leather-Stocking himself.

"I think Miss Elizabeth's thoughts should be taken," said Natty. "I've known the squaws give very good counsel when the Indians had been dumfounded. If she says that I ought to lose, I agree to give it up."

"Then I adjudge you to be a loser for this time," said Miss Temple; "but pay your money and renew your chance; unless Brom will sell me the bird for a dollar. I will give him the money, and save the life of the poor victim."

This proposition was evidently but little relished by any of the listeners, even the negro feeling the evil excitement of the chances. In the mean while, as Billy Kirby was preparing himself for another shot, Natty left the stand, with an extremely dissatisfied manner, muttering:

"There hasn't been such a thing as a good flint sold at the foot of the lake since the Indian traders used to come into the country; and, if a body should go into the flats along the streams in the hills to hunt for such a thing, it's ten to one but they will be all covered up with the plough. Heigho! it seems to me that just as the game grows scarce, and a body wants the best ammunition to get a livelihood, everything that's bad falls on him like a judgment. But I'll change the stone, for Billy Kirby hasn't the eye for such a mark, I know."

The wood-chopper seemed now entirely sensible that his reputation depended on his care; nor did he neglect any means to insure success. He drew up his rifle, and renewed his aim again and again, still appearing reluctant to fire. No sound was heard from even Brom, during these portentous movements, until Kirby discharged his piece, with the same want of success as before. Then, indeed, the shouts of the negro rang through the bushes and sounded among the trees of the neighboring forest like the outcries of a tribe of Indians. He laughed, rolling his head first on one side, then on the other, until nature seemed exhausted with mirth. He danced until his legs were wearied with motion in the snow; and, in short, he exhibited all that violence of joy that characterizes the mirth of a thoughtless negro.

The wood-chopper had exerted all his art, and felt a proportionate degree of disappointment at the failure. He first examined the bird with the utmost attention, and more than once suggested that he had touched its feathers; but the voice of the multitude was against

him, for it felt disposed to listen to the often-repeated cries of the black to "gib a nigger fair play."

Finding it impossible to make out a title to the bird, Kirby turned fiercely to the black and said:

"Shut your oven, you crow! Where is the man that can hit a turkey's head at a hundred yards? I was a fool for trying. You needn't make an uproar like a falling pine-tree about it. Show me the man who can do it."

"Look this a-way, Billy Kirby," said Leather-Stocking, "and let them clear the mark, and I'll show you a man who's made better shots afore now, and that when he's been hard pressed by the savages and wild beasts."

"Perhaps there is one whose rights come before ours, Leather-Stocking," said Miss Temple. "If so, we will waive our privilege."

"If it be me that you have reference to," said the young hunter, "I shall decline another chance. My shoulder is yet weak, I find."

Elizabeth regarded his manner, and thought that she could discern a tinge on his cheek that spoke the shame of conscious poverty. She said no more, but suffered her own champion to make a trial. Although Natty Bumppo had certainly made hundreds of more momentous shots at his enemies or his game, yet he never exerted himself more to excel. He raised his piece three several times: once to get his range; once to calculate his distance; and once because the bird, alarmed by the death-like stillness, turned its head quickly to examine its foes. But the fourth time he fired. The smoke, the report, and the momentary shock prevented most of the spectators from instantly knowing the result; but Elizabeth, when she saw her champion drop the end of his rifle in the snow and open his mouth in one of its silent laughs, and then proceed very coolly to recharge his piece, knew that he had been successful. The boys rushed to the mark, and lifted the turkey on high, lifeless, and with nothing but the remnant of a head. "Bring in the creatur," said Leather-Stocking, "and put it at the feet of the lady. I was her deputy in the matter, and the bird is her property."

"And a good deputy you have proved yourself," returned Elizabeth—"so good, Cousin Richard, that I would advise you to remember his qualities." She paused, and the gayety that beamed on her face gave place to a more serious earnestness. She even blushed a little as she turned to the young hunter, and with the charm of a woman's manner added: "But it was only to see an exhibition of the far-famed skill of Leather-Stocking, that I tried my fortunes. Will you, sir, accept the bird as a small peace offering for the hurt that prevented your own success?"

The expression with which the youth received this present was indescribable. He appeared to yield to the blandishment of her air, in opposition to a strong inward impulse to the contrary. He bowed, and raised the victim silently from her feet, but continued silent.

Elizabeth handed the black a piece of silver as a remuneration for his loss, which had some effect in again unbending his muscles, and then expressed to her companion her readiness to return homeward.

"Wait a minute, Cousin Bess," cried Richard; "there is an uncertainty about the rules of this sport that it is proper I should remove. If you will appoint a committee, gentlemen, to wait on me this morning, I will draw up in writing a set of regulations—" He stopped, with some indignation, for at that instant a hand was laid familiarly on the shoulder of the High Sheriff of—.

"A merry Christmas to you, Cousin Dickon," said Judge Temple, who had approached the party unperceived: "I must have a vigilant eye to my daughter, sir, if you are to be seized daily with these gallant fits. I admire the taste which would introduce a lady to such scenes!"

"It is her own perversity, 'Duke,'" cried the disappointed sheriff, who felt the loss of the first salutation as grievously as many a man would a much greater misfortune; "and I must say that she comes honestly by it. I led her out to show her the improvements, but away she scampered, through the snow, at the first sound of fire-arms, the same as if she had been brought up in a camp, instead of a first-rate boarding-school. I do think, Judge Temple, that such dangerous amusements should be suppressed, by statute; nay, I doubt whether they are not already indictable at common law."

"Well, sir, as you are sheriff of the county, it becomes your duty to examine into the matter," returned the smiling Marmaduke, "I perceive that Bess has executed her commission, and I hope it met with a favorable reception." Richard glanced his eye at the packet which he held in his hand, and the slight anger produced by disappointment vanished instantly.

"Ah! 'Duke, my dear cousin," he said, "step a little on one side; I have something I would say to you."

Marmaduke complied, and the sheriff led him to a little distance in the bushes, and continued: "First, 'Duke, let me thank you for your friendly interest with the Council and the Governor, without which I am confident that the greatest merit would avail but little. But we are sisters' children—we are sisters' children, and you may use me like one of your horses; ride me or drive me, 'Duke, I am wholly yours. But in my humble opinion, this young companion of Leather-Stocking requires looking after. He has a very dangerous propensity for turkey."

"Leave him to my management, Dickon," said the Judge, "and I will cure his appetite by indulgence. It is with him that I would speak. Let us rejoin the sportsmen."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Poor wretch! the mother that him bare,  
If she had been in presence there,  
In his wan face, and sunburnt hair,  
She had not known her child."  
—Scott.

It diminished, in no degree, the effect produced by the conversation which passed between Judge Temple and the I young hunter, that the former took the arm of his daughter and drew it through his own, when he advanced from the spot whither Richard had led him to that where the youth was standing, leaning on his rifle, and contemplating the dead bird at his feet. The presence of Marmaduke did not interrupt the sports, which were resumed by loud and clamorous disputes concerning the conditions of a chance that involved the life of a bird of much inferior quality to the last. Leather-Stocking and Mohegan had alone drawn aside to their youthful companion; and, although in the immediate vicinity of such a throng, the following conversation was heard only by those who were interested in it.

"I have greatly injured you, Mr. Edwards," said the Judge; but the sudden and inexplicable start with which the person spoken to received this unexpected address, caused him to pause a moment. As no answer was given, and the strong emotion exhibited in the countenance of the youth gradually passed away, he continued: "But fortunately it is in some measure in my power to compensate you for what I have done. My kinsman, Richard Jones, has received an appointment that will, in future, deprive me of his assistance, and leave me, just now, destitute of one who might greatly aid me with his pen. Your manner, notwithstanding appearances, is a sufficient proof of your education, nor will thy shoulder suffer thee to labor, for some time to come." (Marmaduke insensibly relapsed into the language of the Friends as he grew warm.) "My doors are open to thee, my young friend, for in this infant country we harbor no suspicions; little offering to tempt the cupidity of the evil-disposed. Be come my assistant, for at least a season, and receive such compensation as thy services will deserve."

There was nothing in the manner of the offer of the Judge to justify the reluctance, amounting nearly to loathing, with which the youth listened to his speech; but, after a powerful effort for self-command, he replied:

"I would serve you, sir, or any other man, for an honest support, for I do not affect to conceal that my necessities are very great, even beyond what appearances would indicate; but I am fearful that such new duties would interfere too much with more important business; so that I must decline your offer, and depend on my rifle, as before, for subsistence."

Richard here took occasion to whisper to the young lady, who had shrunk a little from the foreground of the picture:

"This, you see, Cousin Bess, is the natural reluctance of a half-breed to leave the savage state. Their attachment to a wandering life is, I verily believe, unconquerable."

"It is a precarious life," observed Marmaduke, without hearing the sheriff's observation, "and one that brings more evils with it than present suffering. Trust me, young friend, my experience is greater than thine, when I tell thee that the unsettled life of these hunters is of vast disadvantage for temporal purposes, and it totally removes one from the influence of more sacred things."

"No, no, Judge," interrupted the Leather-Stocking, who was hitherto unseen, or disregarded; "take him into your shanty in welcome, but tell him truth. I have lived in the woods for forty long years, and have spent five at a time without seeing the light of a clearing bigger than a window in the trees; and I should like to know where you'll find a man, in his sixty-eighth year, who can get an easier living, for all your betterments and your deer laws; and, as for honesty, or doing what's right between man and man, I'll not turn my back to the longest-winded deacon on your Patent."

"Thou art an exception, Leather-Stocking," returned the Judge, nodding good-naturedly at the hunter; "for thou hast a temperance unusual in thy class, and a hardihood exceeding thy years. But this youth is made of I materials too precious to be wasted in the forest—I entreat thee to join my family, if it be but till thy arm is healed. My daughter here, who is mistress of my dwelling, wilt tell thee that thou art welcome."

"Certainly," said Elizabeth, whose earnestness was a little checked by female reserve. "The unfortunate would be welcome at any time, but doubly so when we feel that we have occasioned the evil ourselves." "Yes," said Richard, "and if you relish turkey, young man, there are plenty in the coops, and of the best kind, I can assure you."

Finding himself thus ably seconded, Marmaduke pushed his advantage to the utmost. He entered into a detail of the duties that would attend the situation, and circumstantially mentioned the reward, and all those points which are deemed of importance among men of business. The youth listened in extreme agitation. There was an evident contest in his feelings; at times he appeared to wish eagerly for the change, and then again the incomprehensible expression of disgust would cross his features, like a dark cloud obscuring a noonday sun.

The Indian, in whose manner the depression of self-abasement was most powerfully exhibited, listened to the offers of the Judge with an interest that increased with each syllable. Gradually he drew nigher to the group and when, with his keen glance, he detected the most marked evidence of yielding in the countenance of his young companion, he changed at once from his attitude and look of shame to the front of an Indian warrior, and moving, with great dignity, closer to the parties, he spoke.

"Listen to your father," he said; "his words are old. Let the Young Eagle and the Great Land Chief eat together; let them sleep, without fear, near each other. The children of Miquon love not blood: they are just, and will do right. The sun must rise and set often, be fore men can make one family; it is not the work of a day, but of many winters. The Mingoes and the Delawares are born enemies; their blood can never mix in the wigwam; it never will run in the same stream in the battle. What makes the brother of Miquon and the Young Eagle foes? They are of the same tribe; their fathers and mothers are one. Learn to wait, my son, you are a Delaware, and an

Indian warrior knows how to be patient.”

This figurative address seemed to have great weight with the young man, who gradually yielded to the representations of Marmaduke, and eventually consented to his proposal. It was, however, to be an experiment only; and, if either of the parties thought fit to rescind the engagement, it was left at his option so to do. The remarkable and ill-concealed reluctance of the youth to accept of an offer, which most men in his situation would consider as an unhoped-for elevation, occasioned no little surprise in those to whom he was a stranger; and it left a slight impression to his disadvantage. When the parties separated, they very naturally made the subject the topic of a conversation, which we shall relate; first commencing with the Judge, his daughter, and Richard, who were slowly pursuing the way back to the mansion-house.

“I have surely endeavored to remember the holy man dates of our Redeemer, when he bids us 'love them who despitefully use you,' in my intercourse with this incomprehensible boy,” said Marmaduke. “I know not what there is in my dwelling to frighten a lad of his years, unless it may be thy presence and visage, Bess.”

“No, no,” said Richard, with great simplicity, “it is not Cousin Bess. But when did you ever know a half-breed, 'Duke, who could bear civilization? For that matter, they are worse than the savages themselves! Did you notice how knock-kneed he stood, Elizabeth, and what a wild look he had in his eyes?”

“I heeded not his eyes, nor his knees, which would be all the better for a little humbling. Really, my dear sir, I think you did exercise the Christian virtue of patience to the utmost. I was disgusted with his airs, long before he consented to make one of our family. Truly we are much honored by the association! In what apartment is he to be placed, sir; and at what table is he to receive his nectar and ambrosia?”

“With Benjamin and Remarkable,” interrupted Mr. Jones; “you sorely would not make the youth eat with the blacks! He is part Indian, it is true; but the natives hold the negroes in great contempt. No, no; he would starve before he would break a crust with the negroes.”

“I am but too happy, Dickon, to tempt him to eat with ourselves,” said Marmaduke, “to think of offering even the indignity you propose.”

“Then, sir,” said Elizabeth, with an air that was slightly affected, as if submitting to her father's orders in opposition to her own will, “it is your pleasure that he be a gentleman.”

“Certainly; he is to fill the station of one. Let him receive the treatment that is due to his place, until we find him unworthy of it.”

“Well, well, 'Duke,” cried the sheriff, “you will find it no easy matter to make a gentleman of him. The old proverb says that 'it takes three generations to make a gentleman.' There was my father whom everybody knew my grandfather was an M.D., and his father a D.D.; and his father came from England, I never could come at the truth of his origin; but he was either a great merchant in London, or a great country lawyer, or the youngest son of a bishop.”

“Here is a true American genealogy for you,” said Marmaduke, laughing. “It does very well till you get across the water, where, as everything is obscure, it is certain to deal in the superlative. You are sure that your English progenitor was great, Dickon, whatever his profession might have been?”

“To be sure I am,” returned the other. “I have heard my old aunt talk of him by the month. We are of a good family, Judge Temple, and have never filled any but honorable stations in life.”

“I marvel that you should be satisfied with so scanty a provision of gentility in the olden time, Dickon. Most of the American genealogists commence their traditions like the stories for children, with three brothers, taking especial care that one of the triumvirate shall be the progenitor of any of the same name who may happen to be better furnished with worldly gear than themselves. But, here, all are equal who know how to conduct themselves with propriety; and Oliver Edwards comes into my family on a footing with both the high sheriff and the judge.”

“Well, 'Duke, I call this democracy, not republicanism; but I say nothing; only let him keep within the law, or I shall show him that the freedom of even this country is under wholesome restraint.”

“Surely, Dickon, you will not execute till I condemn! But what says Bess to the new inmate? We must pay a deference to the ladies in this matter, after all.”

“Oh, sir!” returned Elizabeth, “I believe I am much like a certain Judge Temple in this particular—not easily to be turned from my opinion. But, to be serious, although I must think the introduction of a demi-savage into the family a somewhat startling event, whosoever you think proper to countenance may be sure of my respect.”

The Judge drew her arm more closely in his own and smiled, while Richard led the way through the gate of the little court-yard in the rear of the dwelling, dealing out his ambiguous warnings with his accustomed loquacity.

On the other hand, the foresters—for the three hunters, notwithstanding their difference in character, well deserved this common name—pursued their course along the skirts of the village in silence. It was not until they had reached the lake, and were moving over its frozen surface toward the foot of the mountain, where the hut stood, that the youth exclaimed:

“Who could have foreseen this a month since! I have consented to serve Marmaduke Temple—to be an inmate in the dwelling of the greatest enemy of my race; yet what better could I do? The servitude cannot be long; and, when the motive for submitting to it ceases to exist, I will shake it off like the dust from my feet.”

“Is he a Mingo, that you will call him enemy?” said Mohegan. “The Delaware warrior sits still, and waits the time of the Great Spirit. He is no woman, to cry out like a child.”

“Well, I'm mistrustful, John,” said Leather-Stocking, in whose air there had been, during the whole business, a strong expression of doubt and uncertainty. “They say that there's new laws in the land, and I'm sartin that there's new ways in the mountains. One hardly knows the lakes and streams, they've altered the country so much. I must say I'm mistrustful of such smooth speakers; for I've known



the whites talk fair when they wanted the Indian lands most. This I will say, though I'm a white myself, and was born nigh York, and of honest parents, too."

"I will submit," said the youth; "I will forget who I am. Cease to remember, old Mohegan, that I am the descendant of a Delaware chief, who once was master of these noble hills, these beautiful vales, and of this water, over which we tread. Yes, yes; I will become his bonds man—his slave, Is it not an honorable servitude, old man?"

"Old man!" repeated the Indian solemnly, and pausing in his walk, as usual, when much excited; "yes, John is old. Son of my brother! if Mohegan was young, when would his rifle be still? Where would the deer hide, and he not find him? But John is old; his hand is the hand of a squaw; his tomahawk is a hatchet; brooms and baskets are his enemies—he strikes no other. Hunger and old age come together. See Hawk-eye! when young, he would go days and eat nothing; but should he not put the brush on the fire now, the blaze would go out. Take the son of Miquon by the hand, and he will help you."

"I'm not the man I was, I'll own, Chingachgook," returned the Leather-Stocking; "but I can go without a meal now, on occasion. When we tracked the Iroquois through the 'Beech-woods,' they drove the game afore them, for I hadn't a morsel to eat from Monday morning come Wednesday sundown, and then I shot as fat a buck, on the Pennsylvania line, as ever mortal laid eyes on. It would have done your heart good to have seen the Delaware eat; for I was out scouting and skrimmaging with their tribe at the time. Lord! The Indians, lad, lay still, and just waited till Providence should send them their game, but I foraged about, and put a deer up, and put him down too, afore he had made a dozen jumps. I was too weak and too ravenous to stop for his flesh, so I took a good drink of his blood, and the Indians ate of his meat raw. John was there, and John knows. But then starvation would be apt to be too much for me now, I will own, though I'm no great eater at any time."

"Enough is said, my friend," cried the youth. "I feel that everywhere the sacrifice is required at my hands, and it shall be made; but say no more, I entreat you; I can not bear this subject now."

His companions were silent; and they soon reached the hut, which they entered, after removing certain complicated and ingenious fastenings, that were put there apparently to guard a property of but very little value. Immense piles of snow lay against the log walls of this secluded habitation on one side; while fragments of small trees, and branches of oak and chestnut, that had been torn from their parent stems by the winds, were thrown into a pile on the other. A small column of smoke rose through a chimney of sticks, cemented with clay, along the side of the rock, and had marked the snow above with its dark tinges, in a wavy line, from the point of emission to an other, where the hill receded from the brow of a precipice, and held a soil that nourished trees of a gigantic growth, that overhung the little bottom beneath.

The remainder of the day passed off as such days are commonly spent in a new country. The settlers thronged to the academy again, to witness the second effort of Mr. Grant; and Mohegan was one of his hearers. But, not withstanding the divine fixed his eyes intently on the Indian when he invited his congregation to advance to the table, the shame of last night's abasement was yet too keen in the old chief to suffer him to move.

When the people were dispersing, the clouds that had been gathering all the morning were dense and dirty, and before half of the curious congregation had reached their different cabins, that were placed in every glen and hollow of the mountains, or perched on the summits of the hills themselves, the rain was falling in torrents. The dark edges of the stumps began to exhibit themselves, as the snow settled rapidly; the fences of logs and brush, which before had been only traced by long lines of white mounds, that ran across the valley and up the mountains, peeped out from their covering, and the black stubs were momentarily becoming more distinct, as large masses of snow and ice fell from their sides, under the influence of the thaw.

Sheltered in the warm hall of her father's comfortable mansion, Elizabeth, accompanied by Louisa Grant, looked abroad with admiration at the ever-varying face of things without. Even the village, which had just before been glittering with the color of the frozen element, reluctantly dropped its mask, and the houses exposed their dark roofs and smoked chimneys. The pines shook off the covering of snow, and everything seemed to be assuming its proper hues with a transition that bordered on the supernatural.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"And yet, poor Edwin was no vulgar boy."  
—Beattie.

The close of Christmas Day, A.D. 1793, was tempestuous, but comparatively warm. When darkness had again hid the objects in the village from the gaze of Elizabeth, she turned from the window, where she had remained while the least vestige of light lingered over the tops of the dark pines, with a curiosity that was rather excited than appeased by the passing glimpses of woodland scenery that she had caught during the day.

With her arm locked in that of Miss Grant, the young mistress of the mansion walked slowly up and down the hall, musing on scenes that were rapidly recurring to her memory, and possibly dwelling, at times, in the sanctuary of her thoughts, on the strange occurrences that had led to the introduction to her father's family of one whose Manners so singularly contradicted the inferences to be drawn from his situation. The expiring heat of the apartment—for its great size required a day to reduce its temperature—had given to her cheeks a bloom that exceeded their natural color, while the mild and melancholy features of Louisa were brightened with a faint tinge, that, like the hectic of disease, gave a painful interest to her beauty.

The eyes of the gentlemen, who were yet seated around the rich wines of Judge Temple, frequently wandered from the table, that was placed at one end of the hall, to the forms that were silently moving over its length. Much mirth, and that, at times, of a boisterous kind, proceeded from the mouth of Richard; but Major Hartmann was not yet excited to his pitch of merriment, and Marmaduke respected the presence of his clerical guest too much to indulge in even the innocent humor that formed no small ingredient in his character.

Such were, and such continued to be, the pursuits of the party, for half an hour after the shutters were closed, and candles were placed in various parts of the hall, as substitutes for departing daylight. The appearance of Benjamin, staggering under the burden of an armful of wood, was the first interruption to the scene.

"How now, Master Pump!" roared the newly appointed sheriff; "is there not warmth enough in 'Duke's best Madeira to keep up the animal heat through this thaw? Remember, old boy, that the Judge is particular with his beech and maple, beginning to dread already a scarcity of the precious articles. Ha! ha! ha! 'Duke, you are a good, warm-hearted relation, I will own, as in duty bound, but you have some queer notions about you, after all. 'Come, let us be jolly, and cast away folly."

The notes gradually sank into a hum, while the major-domo threw down his load, and, turning to his interrogator with an air of earnestness, replied:

"Why, look you, Squire Dickon, mayhap there's a warm latitude round about the table there, tho' it's not the stuff to raise the heat in my body, neither; the raal Jamaiky being the only thing to do that, besides good wood, or some such matter as Newcastle coal. But, if I know anything of the weather, d'ye see, it's time to be getting all snog, and for putting the ports in and stirring the fires a bit. Mayhap I've not followed the seas twenty-seven years, and lived another seven in these here woods, for nothing, gemmen."

"Why, does it bid fair for a change in the weather, Benjamin?" inquired the master of the house.

"There's a shift of wind, your honor," returned the steward; "and when there's a shift of wind, you may look for a change in this here climate. I was aboard of one of Rodney's fleet, dye see, about the time we licked De Grasse, Mounsheer Lor Quaw's countryman, there; and the wind was here at the south'ard and east'ard; and I was below, mixing a toothful of hot stuff for the captain of marines, who dined, dye see, in the cabin, that there very same day; and I suppose he wanted to put out the captain's fire with a gun-room ingyne; and so, just as I got it to my own liking, after tasting pretty often, for the soldier was difficult to please, slap came the foresail agin' the mast, whiz went the ship round on her heel, like a whirligig. And a lucky thing was it that our helm was down; for as she gathered starnway she paid off, which was more than every ship in the fleet did, or could do. But she strained herself in the trough of the sea, and she shipped a deal of water over her quarter. I never swallowed so much clear water at a time in my life as I did then, for I was looking up the after-hatch at the instant."

"I wonder, Benjamin, that you did not die with a dropsy!" said Marmaduke.

"I mought, Judge," said the old tar, with a broad grin; "but there was no need of the medicine chest for a cure; for, as I thought the brew was spoilt for the marine's taste, and there was no telling when another sea might come and spoil it for mine. I finished the mug on the spot. So then all hands was called to the pumps, and there we began to ply the pumps—"

"Well, but the weather?" interrupted Marmaduke; "what of the weather without doors?"

"Why here the wind has been all day at the south, and now there's a lull, as if the last blast was out of the bellows; and there's a streak along the mountains, to the northard, that, just now, wasn't wider than the bigness of your hand; and then the clouds drive afore it as you'd brail a mainsail, and the stars are heaving in sight, like so many lights and beacons, put there to warn us to pile on the wood; and, if so be that I'm a judge of weather, it's getting to be time to build on a fire, or you'll have half of them there porter bottles, and them dimmyjohns of wine, in the locker here, breaking with the frost, afore the morning watch is called."

"Thou art a prudent sentinel," said the Judge. "Act thy pleasure with the forests, for this night at feast."

Benjamin did as he was ordered; nor had two hours elapsed, before the prudence of his precautions became very visible. The south wind had, indeed, blown itself cut, and it was succeeded by the calmness that usually gave warning of a serious change in the weather. Long before the family retired to rest, the cold had become cuttingly severe; and when Monsieur Le Quoi sallied forth under a bright moon, to seek his own abode, he was compelled to beg a blanket, in which he might envelop his form, in addition to the numerous

garments that his sagacity had provided for the occasion. The divine and his daughter remained as inmates of the mansion-house during the night, and the excess of last night's merriment induced the gentlemen to make an early retreat to their several apartments. Long before midnight, the whole family were invisible.

Elizabeth and her friend had not yet lost their senses in sleep, and the howlings of the northwest wind were heard around the buildings, and brought with them that exquisite sense of comfort that is ever excited under such circumstances, in an apartment where the fire has not yet ceased to glimmer, and curtains, and shutters, and feathers unite to preserve the desired temperature. Once, just as her eyes had opened, apparently in the last stage of drowsiness, the roaring winds brought with them a long and plaintive howl, that seemed too wild for a dog, and yet resembled the cries of that faithful animal, when night awakens his vigilance, and gives sweetness and solemnity to its charms. The form of Louis Grant instinctively pressed nearer to that of the young heiress, who, finding her companion was yet awake, said in a low tone, as if afraid to break a charm with her voice:

"Those distant cries are plaintive, and even beautiful. Can they be the hounds from the hut of Leather-Stocking?"

"They are wolves, who have ventured from the mountain, on the lake," whispered Louisa, "and who are only kept from the village by the lights. One night, since we have been here, hunger drove them to our very door. Oh, what a dreadful night it was! But the riches of Judge Temple have given him too many safeguards, to leave room for fear in this house."

"The enterprise of Judge Temple is taming the very forests!" exclaimed Elizabeth, throwing off the covering, and partly rising in the bed. "How rapidly is civilization treading on the foot of Nature!" she continued, as her eye glanced over not only the comforts, but the luxuries of her apartment, and her ear again listened to the distant, but often repeated howls from the lake. Finding, how-ever, that the timidity of her companion rendered the sounds painful to her, Elizabeth resumed her place, and soon forgot the changes in the country, with those in her own condition, in a deep sleep.

The following morning, the noise of the female servant, who entered the apartment to light the fire, awoke the females. They arose, and finished the slight preparations of their toilets in a clear, cold atmosphere, that penetrated through all the defences of even Miss Temple's warm room. When Elizabeth was attired, she approached a window and drew its curtain, and throwing open its shutters she endeavored to look abroad on the village and the lake. But a thick covering of frost on the glass, while it admitted the light, shut out the view. She raised the sash, and then, indeed, a glorious scene met her delighted eye.

The lake had exchanged its covering of unspotted snow for a face of dark ice, that reflected the rays of the rising sun like a polished mirror. The houses clothed in a dress of the same description, but which, owing to its position, shone like bright steel; while the enormous icicles that were pendent from every roof caught the brilliant light, apparently throwing it from one to the other, as each glittered, on the side next the luminary, with a golden lustre that melted away, on its opposite, into the dusky shades of a background. But it was the appearance of the boundless forests that covered the hills as they rose in the distance, one over the other, that most attracted the gaze of Miss Temple. The huge branches of the pines and hemlocks bent with the weight of the ice they supported, while their summits rose above the swelling tops of the oaks, beeches, and maples, like spires of burnished silver issuing from domes of the same material. The limits of the view, in the west, were marked by an undulating outline of bright light, as if, reversing the order of nature, numberless suns might momentarily be expected to heave above the horizon. In the foreground of the picture, along the shores of the lake, and near to the village, each tree seemed studded with diamonds. Even the sides of the mountains where the rays of the sun could not yet fall, were decorated with a glassy coat, that presented every gradation of brilliancy, from the first touch of the luminary to the dark foliage of the hemlock, glistening through its coat of crystal. In short, the whole view was one scene of quivering radiancy, as lake, mountains, village, and woods, each emitted a portion of light, tinged with its peculiar hue, and varied by its position and its magnitude.

"See!" cried Elizabeth; "see, Louisa; hasten to the window, and observe the miraculous change!"

Miss Grant complied; and, after bending for a moment in silence from the opening, she observed, in a low tone, as if afraid to trust the sound of her voice:

"The change is indeed wonderful! I am surprised that he should be able to effect it so soon."

Elizabeth turned in amazement, to hear so skeptical a sentiment from one educated like her companion; but was surprised to find that, instead of looking at the view, the mild blue eyes of Miss Grant were dwelling on the form of a well-dressed young man, who was standing before the door of the building, in earnest conversation with her father. A second look was necessary before she was able to recognize the person of the young hunter in a plain, but assuredly the ordinary, garb of a gentleman.

"Everything in this magical country seems to border on the marvellous," said Elizabeth; "and, among all the changes, this is certainly not the least wonderful. The actors are as unique as the scenery."

Miss Grant colored and drew in her head.

"I am a simple country girl, Miss Temple, and I am afraid you will find me but a poor companion," she said. "I—I am not sure that I understand all you say. But I really thought that you wished me to notice the alteration in Mr. Edwards. Is it not more wonderful when we recollect his origin? They say he is part Indian."

"He is a genteel savage; but let us go down, and give the sachem his tea; for I suppose he is a descendant of King Philip, if not a grandson of Pocahontas."

The ladies were met in the hall by Judge Temple, who took his daughter aside to apprise her of that alteration in the appearance of their new inmate, with which she was already acquainted.

"He appears reluctant to converse on his former situation," continued Marmaduke "but I gathered from his discourse, as is apparent from his manner, that he has seen better days; and I am really inclining to the opinion of Richard, as to his origin; for it was no unusual thing for the Indian agents to rear their children in a laudable manner, and—"

"Very well, my dear sir," interrupted his daughter, laughing and averting her eyes; "it is all well enough, I dare say; but, as I do not

understand a word of the Mohawk language he must be content to speak English; and as for his behavior, I trust to your discernment to control it."

"Ay! but, Bess," cried the judge, detaining her gently by the hand, "nothing must be said to him of his past life. This he has begged particularly of me, as a favor. He is, perhaps, a little soured, just now, with his wounded arm; the injury seems very light, and another time he may be more communicative."

"Oh! I am not much troubled, sir, with that laudable thirst after knowledge that is called curiosity. I shall believe him to be the child of Corn-stalk, or Corn-planter, or some other renowned chieftain; possibly of the Big Snake himself; and shall treat him as such until he sees fit to shave his good-looking head, borrow some half-dozen pair of my best earrings, shoulder his rifle again, and disappear as suddenly as he made his entrance. So come, my dear sir, and let us not forget the rites of hospitality, for the short time he is to remain with us."

Judge Temple smiled at the playfulness of his child, and taking her arm they entered the breakfast parlor, where the young hunter was seated with an air that showed his determination to domesticate himself in the family with as little parade as possible.

Such were the incidents that led to this extraordinary increase in the family of Judge Temple, where, having once established the youth, the subject of our tale requires us to leave him for a time, to pursue with diligence and intelligence the employments that were assigned him by Marmaduke.

Major Hartmann made his customary visit, and took his leave of the party for the next three months. Mr. Grant was compelled to be absent most of his time, in remote parts of the country, and his daughter became almost a constant visitor at the mansion-house. Richard entered, with his constitutional eagerness, on the duties of his new office; and, as Marmaduke was much employed with the constant applications of adventures for farms, the winter passed swiftly away. The lake was the principal scene for the amusements of the young people; where the ladies, in their one-horse cutter, driven by Richard, and attended, when the snow would admit of it, by young Ed wards on his skates, spent many hours taking the benefit of exercise in the clear air of the hills. The reserve of the youth gradually gave way to time and his situation, though it was still evident, to a close observer, that he had frequent moments of bitter and intense feeling.

Elizabeth saw many large openings appear in the sides of the mountains during the three succeeding months, where different settlers had, in the language of the country "made their pitch," while the numberless sleighs that passed through the village, loaded with wheat and barrels of potashes, afforded a clear demonstration that all these labors were not undertaken in vain. In short, the whole country was exhibiting the bustle of a thriving settlement, where the highways were thronged with sleighs, bearing piles of rough household furniture, studded, here and there, with the smiling faces of women and children, happy in the excitement of novelty; or with loads of produce, hastening to the common market at Albany, that served as so many snares to induce the emigrants to enter into those wild mountains in search of competence and happiness.

The village was alive with business, the artisans in creasing in wealth with the prosperity of the country, and each day witnessing some nearer approach to the manners and usages of an old-settled town. The man who carried the mail or "the post," as he was called, talked much of running a stage, and, once or twice during the winter, he was seen taking a single passenger, in his cutter, through the snow-banks, toward the Mohawk, along which a regular vehicle glided, semi-weekly, with the velocity of lightning, and under the direction of a knowing whip from the "down countries." Toward spring, divers families, who had been into the "old States" to see their relatives, returned in time to save the snow, frequently bringing with them whole neighborhoods, who were tempted by their representations to leave the farms of Connecticut and Massachusetts, to make a trial of fortune in the woods.

During all this time, Oliver Edwards, whose sudden elevation excited no surprise in that changeful country, was earnestly engaged in the service of Marmaduke, during the days; but his nights were often spent in the hut of Leather-Stocking. The intercourse between the three hunters was maintained with a certain air of mystery, it is true, but with much zeal and apparent interest to all the parties. Even Mohegan seldom came to the mansion-house, and Natty never; but Edwards sought every leisure moment to visit his former abode, from which he would often return in the gloomy hours of night through the snow, or, if detained beyond the time at which the family retired to rest, with the morning sun. These visits certainly excited much speculation in those to whom they were known, but no comments were made, excepting occasionally in whispers from Richard, who would say:

"It is not at all remarkable; a half-breed can never be weaned from the savage ways—and, for one of his lineage, the boy is much nearer civilization than could, in reason, be expected."

## CHAPTER XX.

"Away! nor let me loiter in my song,  
For we have many a mountain-path to tread."  
—Byron.

As the spring gradually approached, the immense piles of snow that, by alternate thaws and frosts, and repeated storms, had obtained a firmness which threatened a tiresome durability, began to yield to the influence of milder breezes and a warmer sun. The gates of heaven at times seemed to open, and a bland air diffused itself over the earth, when animate and inanimate nature would awaken, and, for a few hours, the gayety of spring shone in every eye and smiled on every field. But the shivering blasts from the north would carry their chill influence over the scene again, and the dark and gloomy clouds that intercepted the rays of the sun were not more cold and dreary than the reaction. These struggles between the seasons became daily more frequent, while the earth, like a victim to contention, slowly lost the animated brilliancy of winter, without obtaining the aspect of spring.

Several weeks were consumed in this cheerless manner, during which the inhabitants of the country gradually changed their pursuits from the social and bustling movements of the time of snow to the laborious and domestic engagements of the coming season. The village was no longer thronged with visitors; the trade that had enlivened the shops for several months, began to disappear; the highways lost their shining coats of beaten snow in impassable sloughs, and were deserted by the gay and noisy travellers who, in sleighs, had, during the winter, glided along their windings; and, in short, everything seemed indicative of a mighty change, not only in the earth, but in those who derived their sources of comfort and happiness from its bosom.

The younger members of the family in the mansion house, of which Louisa Grant was now habitually one, were by no means indifferent observers of these fluctuating and tardy changes. While the snow rendered the roads passable, they had partaken largely in the amusements of the winter, which included not only daily rides over the mountains, and through every valley within twenty miles of them, but divers ingenious and varied sources of pleasure on the bosom of their frozen lake. There had been excursions in the equipage of Richard, when with his four horses he had outstripped the winds, as it flew over the glassy ice which invariably succeeded a thaw. Then the exciting and dangerous "whirligig" would be suffered to possess its moment of notice. Cutters, drawn by a single horse, and handsleds, impelled by the gentlemen on skates, would each in turn be used; and, in short, every source of relief against the tediousness of a winter in the mountains was resorted to by the family. Elizabeth was compelled to acknowledge to her father, that the season, with the aid of his library, was much less irksome than she had anticipated.

As exercise in the open air was in some degree necessary to the habits of the family, when the constant recurrence of frosts and thaws rendered the roads, which were dangerous at the most favorable times, utterly impassable for wheels, saddle-horses were used as substitutes for other conveyances. Mounted on small and sure-footed beasts, the ladies would again attempt the passages of the mountains and penetrate into every retired glen where the enterprise of a settler had induced him to establish himself. In these excursions they were attended by some one or all of the gentlemen of the family, as their different pursuits admitted. Young Edwards was hourly becoming more familiarized to his situation, and not infrequently mingled in the parties with an unconcern and gayety that for a short time would expel all unpleasant recollections from his mind. Habit, and the buoyancy of youth, seemed to be getting the ascendancy over the secret causes of his uneasiness; though there were moments when the same remarkable expression of disgust would cross his intercourse with Marmaduke, that had distinguished their conversations in the first days of their acquaintance.

It was at the close of the month of March, that the sheriff succeeded in persuading his cousin and her young friend to accompany him in a ride to a hill that was said to overhang the lake in a manner peculiar to itself.

"Besides, Cousin Bess," continued the indefatigable Richard, "we will stop and see the 'sugar bush' of Billy Kirby; he is on the east end of the Ransom lot, making sugar for Jared Ransom. There is not a better hand over a kettle in the county than that same Kirby. You remember, 'Duke, that I had him his first season in our camp; and it is not a wonder that he knows something of his trade.'"

"He's a good chopper, is Billy," observed Benjamin, who held the bridle of the horse while the sheriff mounted; "and he handles an axe much the same as a forecastleman does his marling-spike, or a tailor his goose. They say he'll lift a potash-kettle off the arch alone, though I can't say that I've ever seen him do it with my own eyes; but that is the say. And I've seen sugar of his making, which, maybe, wasn't as white as an old topgallant sail, but which my friend, Mistress Pettibones, within there, said had the true molasses smack to it; and you are not the one, Squire Dickens, to be told that Mistress Remarkable has a remarkable tooth for sweet things in her nut-grinder."

The loud laugh that succeeded the wit of Benjamin, and in which he participated with no very harmonious sounds himself, very fully illustrated the congenial temper which existed between the pair. Most of its point was, however, lost on the rest of the party, who were either mounting their horses or assisting the ladies at the moment. When all were safely in their saddles, they moved through the village in great order. They paused for a moment before the door of Monsieur Le Quoi, until he could bestride his steed, and then, issuing from the little cluster of houses, they took one of the principal of those highways that centred in the village.

As each night brought with it a severe frost, which the heat of the succeeding day served to dissipate, the equestrians were compelled to proceed singly along the margin of the road, where the turf, and firmness of the ground, gave the horses a secure footing. Very trifling indications of vegetation were to be seen, the surface of the earth presenting a cold, wet, and cheerless aspect that chilled the blood. The snow yet lay scattered over most of those distant clearings that were visible in different parts of the mountains; though here and there an opening might be seen where, as the white covering yielded to the season, the bright and lively green of the wheat served to enkindle the hopes of the husbandman. Nothing could be more marked than the contrast between the earth and the heavens; for, while the former presented the dreary view that we have described, a warm and invigorating sun was dispensing his heats from a sky

that contained but a solitary cloud, and through an atmosphere that softened the colors of the sensible horizon until it shone like a sea of blue.

Richard led the way on this, as on all other occasions that did not require the exercise of unusual abilities; and as he moved along, he essayed to enliven the party with the sounds of his experienced voice.

"This is your true sugar weather, 'Duke," he cried; "a frosty night and a sunshiny day. I warrant me that the sap runs like a mill-tail up the maples this warm morning. It is a pity, Judge, that you do not introduce a little more science into the manufactory of sugar among your tenants. It might be done, sir, without knowing as much as Dr. Franklin—it might be done, Judge Temple."

"The first object of my solicitude, friend Jones," returned Marmaduke, "is to protect the sources of this great mine of comfort and wealth from the extravagance of the people themselves. When this important point shall be achieved, it will be in season to turn our attention to an improvement in the manufacture of the article, But thou knowest, Richard, that I have already subjected our sugar to the process of the refiner, and that the result has produced loaves as white as the snow on yon fields, and possessing the saccharine quality in its utmost purity."

"Saccharine, or turpentine, or any other 'ine, Judge Temple, you have never made a loaf larger than a good-sized sugar-plum," returned the sheriff. "Now, sir, I assert that no experiment is fairly tried, until it be reduced to practical purposes. If, sir, I owned a hundred, or, for that matter, two hundred thousand acres of land, as you do. I would build a sugar house in the village; I would invite learned men to an investigation of the subject—and such are easily to be found, sir; yes, sir, they are not difficult to find—men who unite theory with practice; and I would select a wood of young and thrifty trees; and, instead of making loaves of the size of a lump of candy, dam'me, 'Duke, but I'd have them as big as a haystack."

"And purchase the cargo of one of those ships that they say are going to China," cried Elizabeth; "turn your pot ash-kettles into teacups, the scows on the lake into saucers, bake your cake in yonder lime-kiln, and invite the county to a tea-party. How wonderful are the projects of genius! Really, sir, the world is of opinion that Judge Temple has tried the experiment fairly, though he did not cause his loaves to be cast in moulds of the magnitude that would suit your magnificent conceptions."

"You may laugh, Cousin Elizabeth—you may laugh, madam," retorted Richard, turning himself so much in his saddle as to face the party, and making dignified gestures with his whip; "but I appeal to common sense, good sense, or, what is of more importance than either, to the sense of taste, which is one of the five natural senses, whether a big loaf of sugar is not likely to contain a better illustration of a proposition than such a lump as one of your Dutch women puts under her tongue when she drinks her tea. There are two ways of doing everything, the right way and the wrong way. You make sugar now, I will admit, and you may, possibly, make loaf-sugar; but I take the question to be, whether you make the best possible sugar, and in the best possible loaves."

"Thou art very right, Richard," observed Marmaduke, with a gravity in his air that proved how much he was interested in the subject. "It is very true that we manufacture sugar, and the inquiry is quite useful, how much? and in what manner? I hope to live to see the day when farms and plantations shall be devoted to this branch of business. Little is known concerning the properties of the tree itself, the source of all this wealth; how much it may be improved by cultivation, by the use of the hoe and plough."

"Hoe and plough!" roared the sheriff; "would you set a man hoeing round the root of a maple like this?" pointing to one of the noble trees that occur so frequently in that part of the country. "Hoeing trees! are you mad, 'Duke? This is next to hunting for coal! Poh! poh! my dear cousin, hear reason, and leave the management of the sugar-bush to me. Here is Mr. Le Quoi—he has been in the West Indies, and has seen sugar made. Let him give an account of how it is made there, and you will hear the philosophy of the thing. Well, monsieur, how is it that you make sugar in the West Indies; anything in Judge Temples fashion?"

The gentleman to whom this query was put was mounted on a small horse, of no very fiery temperament, and was riding with his stirrups so short as to bring his knees, while the animal rose a small ascent in the wood-path they were now travelling, into a somewhat hazardous vicinity to his chin. There was no room for gesticulation or grace in the delivery of his reply, for the mountain was steep and slippery; and, although the Frenchman had an eye of uncommon magnitude on either side of his face, they did not seem to be half competent to forewarn him of the impediments of bushes, twigs, and fallen trees, that were momentarily crossing his path. With one hand employed in averting these dangers, and the other grasping his bridle to check an untoward speed that his horse was assuming, the native of France responded as follows:

"Sucre! dey do make sucre in Martinique; mais—mais ce n'est pas one tree—ah—ah—vat you call—je voudrais que ces chemins fussent au diable—vat you call—steecq pour la promenade?"

"Cane," said Elizabeth, smiling at the imprecation which the wary Frenchman supposed was understood only by himself. "Oui, mam'selle, cane."

"Yes, yes," cried Richard, "cane is the vulgar name for it, but the real term is *saccharum officinarum*; and what we call the sugar, or hard maple, is *acer saccharinum*. These are the learned names, monsieur, and are such as, doubtless, you well understand."

"Is this Greek or Latin, Mr. Edwards?" whispered Elizabeth to the youth, who was opening a passage for herself and her companions through the bushes, "or per haps it is a still more learned language, for an interpretation of which we must look to you."

The dark eye of the young man glanced toward the speaker, but its resentful expression changed in a moment.

"I shall remember your doubts, Miss Temple, when next I visit my old friend Mohegan, and either his skill, or that of Leather-Stocking, shall solve them."

"And are you, then, really ignorant of their language?"

"Not absolutely; but the deep learning of Mr. Jones is more familiar to me, or even the polite masquerade of Monsieur Le Quoi."

"Do you speak French?" said the lady, with quickness.

"It is a common language with the Iroquois, and through the Canadas," he answered, smiling.

"Ah! but they are Mingoes, and your enemies."

"It will be well for me if I have no worse," said the youth, dashing ahead with his horse, and putting an end to the evasive dialogue.

The discourse, however, was maintained with great vigor by Richard, until they reached an open wood on the summit of the mountain, where the hemlocks and pines totally disappeared, and a grove of the very trees that formed the subject of debate covered the earth with their tall, straight trunks and spreading branches, in stately pride. The underwood had been entirely removed from this grove, or bush, as, in conjunction with the simple arrangements for boiling, it was called, and a wide space of many acres was cleared, which might be likened to the dome of a mighty temple, to which the maples formed the columns, their tops composing the capitals and the heavens the arch. A deep and careless incision had been made into each tree, near its root, into which little spouts, formed of the bark of the alder, or of the sumach, were fastened; and a trough, roughly dug out of the linden, or basswood, was lying at the root of each tree, to catch the sap that flowed from this extremely wasteful and inartificial arrangement.

The party paused a moment, on gaining the flat, to breathe their horses, and, as the scene was entirely new to several of their number, to view the manner of collecting the fluid. A fine, powerful voice aroused them from their momentary silence, as it rang under the branches of the trees, singing the following words of that inimitable doggerel, whose verses, if extended, would reach from the Caters of the Connecticut to the shores of Ontario. The tune was, of course, a familiar air which, although it is said to have been first applied to this nation in derision, circumstances have since rendered so glorious that no American ever hears its jingling cadence without feeling a thrill at his heart:

"The Eastern States be full of men, The Western Full of woods, sir, The hill be like a cattle-pen, The roads be full of goods, sir! Then flow away, my sweet sap, And I will make you boily; Nor catch a wood man's hasty nap, For fear you should get roily. The maple-tree's a precious one, 'Tis fuel, food, and timber; And when your stiff day's work is done, Its juice will make you limber, Then flow away, etc.

"And what's a man without his glass. His wife without her tea, sir? But neither cup nor mug will pass, Without his honey-bee, sir! Then flow away," etc.

During the execution of this sonorous doggerel, Richard kept time with his whip on the mane of his charger, accompanying the gestures with a corresponding movement of his head and body. Toward the close of the song, he was overheard humming the chorus, and, at its last repetition, to strike in at "sweet sap," and carry a second through, with a prodigious addition to the "effect" of the noise, if not to that of the harmony.

"Well done us!" roared the sheriff, on the same key with the tune; "a very good song, Billy Kirby, and very well sung. Where got you the words, lad? Is there more of it, and can you furnish me with a copy?" The sugar-boiler, who was busy in his "camp," at a short distance from the equestrians, turned his head with great indifference, and surveyed the party, as they approached, with admirable coolness. To each individual, as he or she rode close by him, he gave a nod that was extremely good-natured and affable, but which partook largely of the virtue of equality, for not even to the ladies did he in the least vary his mode of salutation, by touching the apology for a hat that he wore, or by any other motion than the one we have mentioned.

"How goes it, how goes it, sheriff?" said the wood-chopper; "what's the good word in the village?"

"Why, much as usual, Billy," returned Richard. "But how is this? where are your four kettles, and your troughs, and your iron coolers? Do you make sugar in this slovenly way? I thought you were one of the best sugar-boilers in the county."

"I'm all that, Squire Jones," said Kirby, who continued his occupation; "I'll turn my back to no man in the Otsego hills for chopping and logging, for boiling down the maple sap, for tending brick-kiln, splitting out rails, making potash, and parling too, or hoeing corn; though I keep myself pretty much to the first business, seeing that the axe comes most natural to me."

"You be von Jack All-trade, Mister Beel," said Monsieur Le Quoi.

"How?" said Kirby, looking up with a simplicity which, coupled with his gigantic frame and manly face, was a little ridiculous, "if you be for trade, mounsher, here is some as good sugar as you'll find the season through. It's as clear from dirt as the Jarman Flats is free from stumps, and it has the raal maple flavor. Such stuff would sell in York for candy."

The Frenchman approached the place where Kirby had deposited his cake of sugar, under the cover of a bark roof, and commenced the examination of the article with the eye of one who well understood its value. Marmaduke had dismounted, and was viewing the works and the trees very closely, and not without frequent expressions of dissatisfaction at the careless manner in which the manufacture was conducted.

"You have much experience in these things, Kirby," he said; "what course do you pursue in making your sugar? I see you have but two kettles."

"Two is as good as two thousand, Judge. I'm none of your polite sugar-makers, that boils for the great folks; but if the raal sweet maple is wanted, I can answer your turn. First, I choose, and then I tap my trees; say along about the last of February, or in these mountains maybe not afore the middle of March; but anyway, just as the sap begins to cleverly run—"

"Well, in this choice," interrupted Marmaduke, "are you governed by any outward signs that prove the quality of the tree?"

"Why, there's judgment in all things," said Kirby, stirring the liquor in his kettles briskly. "There's some thing in knowing when and how to stir the pot. It's a thing that must be larnt. Rome wasn't built in a day, nor for that matter Templeton either, though it may be said to be a quick-growing place. I never put my axe into a stumpy tree, or one that hasn't a good, fresh-looking bark: for trees have disorders, like creatur's; and where's the policy of taking a tree that's sickly, any more than you'd choose a foundered horse to ride post, or an over heated ox to do your logging?"

"All that is true. But what are the signs of illness? how do you distinguish a tree that is well from one that is diseased?"

"How does the doctor tell who has fever and who colds?" interrupted Richard. "By examining the skin, and feeling the pulse, to be sure."

"Sartain," continued Billy; "the squire ain't far out of the way. It's by the look of the thing, sure enough. Well, when the sap begins to

get a free run, I hang over the kettles, and set up the bush. My first boiling I push pretty smartly, till I get the virtue of the sap; but when it begins to grow of a molasses nater, like this in the kettle, one mustn't drive the fires too hard, or you'll burn the sugar; and burny sugar is bad to the taste, let it be never so sweet. So you ladle out from one kettle into the other till it gets so, when you put the stirring-stick into it, that it will draw into a thread—when it takes a kerful hand to manage it. There is a way to drain it off, after it has grained, by putting clay into the pans; bitt it isn't always practised; some doos and some doosn't. Well, mounsher, be we likely to make a trade?"

"I will give you, Mister Etel, for von pound, dix sous."

"No, I expect cash for it; I never dicker my sugar, But, seeing that it's you, mounsher," said Billy, with a Coaxing smile, "I'll agree to receive a gallon of rum, and cloth enough for two shirts if you'll take the molasses in the bargain. It's raal good. I wouldn't deceive you or any man and to my drinking it's about the best molasses that come out of a sugar-bush."

"Mr. Le Quoi has offered you ten pence," said young Edwards.

The manufacturer stared at the speaker with an air of great freedom, but made no reply.

"Oui," said the Frenchman, "ten penny. Jevausraner cie, monsieur: ah! mon Anglois! je l'oublie toujours."

The wood-chopper looked from one to the other with some displeasure; and evidently imbibed the opinion that they were amusing themselves at his expense. He seized the enormous ladle, which was lying on one of his kettles, and began to stir the boiling liquid with great diligence. After a moment passed in dipping the ladle full, and then raising it on high, as the thick rich fluid fell back into the kettle, he suddenly gave it a whirl, as if to cool what yet remained, and offered the bowl to Mr. Le Quoi, saying:

"Taste that, mounsher, and you will say it is worth more than you offer. The molasses itself would fetch the money."

The complaisant Frenchman, after several timid efforts to trust his lips in contact with the howl of the ladle, got a good swallow of the scalding liquid. He clapped his hands on his breast, and looked most piteously at the ladies, for a single instant; and then, to use the language of Billy, when he afterward recounted the tale, "no drumsticks ever went faster on the skin of a sheep than the Frenchman's legs, for a round or two; and then such swearing and spitting in French you never saw. But it's a knowing one, from the old countries, that thinks to get his jokes smoothly over a wood-chopper."

The air of innocence with which Kirby resumed the occupation of stirring the contents of his kettles would have completely deceived the spectators as to his agency in the temporary sufferings of Mr. Le Quoi, had not the reckless fellow thrust his tongue into his cheek, and cast his eyes over the party, with a simplicity of expression that was too exquisite to be natural. Mr. Le Quoi soon recovered his presence of mind and his decorum; and he briefly apologized to the ladies for one or two very intemperate expressions that had escaped him in a moment of extraordinary excitement, and, remounting his horse, he continued in the background during the remainder of the visit, the wit of Kirby putting a violent termination, at once, to all negotiations on the subject of trade. During all this time, Marmaduke had been wandering about the grove, making observations on his favorite trees, and the wasteful manner in which the wood-chopper conducted his manufacture.

"It grieves me to witness the extravagance that pervades this country," said the Judge, "where the settlers trifle with the blessings they might enjoy, with the prodigality of successful adventurers. You are not exempt from the censure yourself, Kirby, for you make dreadful wounds in these trees where a small incision would effect the same object. I earnestly beg you will remember that they are the growth of centuries, and when once gone none living will see their loss remedied."

"Why, I don't know, Judge," returned the man he ad dressed; "it seems to me, if there's plenty of anything in this mountaynious country, it's the trees. If there's any sin in chopping them, I've a pretty heavy account to settle; for I've chopped over the best half of a thousand acres, with my own hands, counting both Varmount and York States; and I hope to live to finish the whull, before I lay up my axe. Chopping comes quite natural to me, and I wish no other employment; but Jared Ransom said that he thought the sugar was likely to be source this season, seeing that so many folks was coming into the settlement, and so I concluded to take the 'bush' on sheares for this one spring. What's the best news, Judge, consarnin ashes? do pots hold so that a man can live by them still? I s'pose they will, if they keep on fighting across the water."

"Thou reasonest with judgment, William," returned Marmaduke. "So long as the Old Worm is to be convulsed with wars, so long will the harvest of America continue."

"Well, it's an ill wind, Judge, that blows nobody any good. I'm sure the country is in a thriving way; and though I know you calkilate greatly on the trees, setting as much store by them as some men would by their children, yet to my eyes they are a sore sight any time, unless I'm privileged to work my will on them: in which case I can't say but they are more to my liking. I have heard the settlers from the old countries say that their rich men keep great oaks and elms, that would make a barrel of pots to the tree, standing round their doors and humsteds and scattered over their farms, just to look at. Now, I call no country much improved that is pretty well covered with trees. Stumps are a different thing, for they don't shade the land; and, besides, you dig them—they make a fence that will turn anything bigger than a hog, being grand for breachy cattle."

"Opinions on such subjects vary much in different countries," said Marmaduke; "but it is not as ornaments that I value the noble trees of this country; it is for their usefulness We are stripping the forests, as if a single year would replace what we destroy. But the hour approaches when the laws will take notice of not only the woods, but the game they contain also."

With this consoling reflection, Marmaduke remounted, and the equestrians passed the sugar-camp, on their way to the promised landscape of Richard. The wood-chop-per was left alone, in the bosom of the forest, to pursue his labors. Elizabeth turned her head, when they reached the point where they were to descend the mountain, and thought that the slow fires that were glimmering under his enormous kettles, his little brush shelter, covered with pieces of hemlock bark, his gigantic size, as he wielded his ladle with a steady and knowing air, aided by the back-ground of stately trees, with their spouts and troughs, formed, altogether, no unreal picture of human life in its first stages of civilization. Perhaps whatever the scene possessed of a romantic character was not injured by the powerful tones of Kirby's voice ringing through the woods as he again awoke his strains to another tune, which was but little more



scientific than the former. All that she understood of the words were:

“And when the proud forest is falling, To my oxen cheerfully calling, From morn until night I am bawling, Whoa, back there, and haw and gee; Till our labor is mutually ended, By my strength and cattle befriended, And against the mosquitoes defended By the bark of the walnut-trees. Away! then, you lads who would buy land; Choose the oak that grows on the high land, or the silvery pine on the dry land, it matters but little to me.”

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Speed! Malise, speed! such cause of haste  
Thine active sinews never braced."  
—Scott.

The roads of Otsego, if we except the principal high ways, were, at the early day of our tale, but little better than wood-paths. The high trees that were growing on the very verge of the wheel-tracks excluded the sun's rays, unless at meridian; and the slowness of the evaporation, united with the rich mould of vegetable decomposition that covered the whole country to the depth of several inches, occasioned but an indifferent foundation for the footing of travellers. Added to these were the inequalities of a natural surface, and the constant recurrence of enormous and slippery roots that were laid bare by the removal of the light soil, together with stumps of trees, to make a passage not only difficult but dangerous. Yet the riders among these numerous obstructions, which were such as would terrify an unpracticed eye, gave no demonstrations of uneasiness as their horses toiled through the sloughs or trotted with uncertain paces along the dark route. In many places the marks on the trees were the only indications of a road, with perhaps an occasional remnant of a pine that, by being cut close to the earth, so as to leave nothing visible but its base of roots, spreading for twenty feet in every direction, was apparently placed there as a beacon to warn the traveller that it was the centre of a highway.

Into one of these roads the active sheriff led the way, first striking out of the foot-path, by which they had descended from the sugar-bush, across a little bridge, formed of round logs laid loosely on sleepers of pine, in which large openings of a formidable width were frequent. The nag of Richard, when it reached one of these gaps, laid its nose along the logs and stepped across the difficult passage with the sagacity of a man; but the blooded filly which Miss Temple rode disdained so humble a movement. She made a step or two with an unusual caution, and then, on reaching the broadest opening, obedient to the curt and whip of her fearless mistress, she bounded across the dangerous pass with the activity of a squirrel.

"Gently, gently, my child," said Marmaduke, who was following in the manner of Richard; "this is not a country for equestrian feats. Much prudence is requisite to journey through our rough paths with safety. Thou mayst practise thy skill in horsemanship on the plains of New Jersey with safety; but in the hills of Otsego they may be suspended for a time."

"I may as well then relinquish my saddle at once, dear sir," returned his daughter; "for if it is to be laid aside until this wild country be improved, old age will overtake me, and put an end to what you term my equestrian feats."

"Say not so, my child," returned her father; "but if thou venturest again as in crossing this bridge, old age will never overtake thee, but I shall be left to mourn thee, cut off in thy pride, my Elizabeth. If thou hadst seen this district of country, as I did, when it lay in the sleep of nature, and had witnessed its rapid changes as it awoke to supply the wants of man, thou wouldst curb thy impatience for a little time, though thou shouldst not check thy steed."

"I recollect hearing you speak of your first visit to these woods, but the impression is faint, and blended with the confused images of childhood. Wild and unsettled as it may yet seem, it must have been a thousand times more dreary then. Will you repeat, dear sir, what you then thought of your enterprise, and what you felt?"

During this speech of Elizabeth, which was uttered with the fervor of affection, young Edwards rode more closely to the side of the Judge, and bent his dark eyes on his countenance with an expression that seemed to read his thoughts.

"Thou wast then young, my child, but must remember when I left thee and thy mother, to take my first survey of these uninhabited mountains," said Marmaduke. "But thou dost not feel all the secret motives that can urge a man to endure privations in order to accumulate wealth. In my case they have not been trifling, and God has been pleased to smile on my efforts. If I have encountered pain, famine, and disease in accomplishing the settlement of this rough territory, I have not the misery of failure to add to the grievances."

"Famine!" echoed Elizabeth; "I thought this was the land of abundance! Had you famine to contend with?"

"Even so, my child," said her father. "Those who look around them now, and see the loads of produce that issue out of every wild path in these mountains during the season of travelling, will hardly credit that no more than five years have elapsed since the tenants of these woods were compelled to eat the scanty fruits of the forest to sustain life, and, with their unpracticed skill, to hunt the beasts as food for their starving families."

"Ay!" cried Richard, who happened to overhear the last of this speech between the notes of the wood-chopper's song, which he was endeavoring to breathe aloud; "that was the starving-time,\* Cousin Bess. I grew as lank as a weasel that fall, and my face was as pale as one of your fever-and-ague visages. Monsieur Le Quoi, there, fell away like a pumpkin in drying; nor do I think you have got fairly over it yet, monsieur. Benjamin, I thought, bore it with a worse grace than any of the family; for he swore it was harder to endure than a short allowance in the calm latitudes. Benjamin is a sad fellow to swear if you starve him ever so little. I had half a mind to quit you then, 'Duke, and to go into Pennsylvania to fatten; but, damn it, thinks I, we are sisters' children, and I will live or die with him, after all."

\* The author has no better apology for interrupting the interest of a work of fiction by these desultory dialogues than that they have reference to facts. In reviewing his work, after so many years, he is compelled to confess it is injured by too many allusions to incidents that are not at all suited to satisfy the just expectations of the general reader. One of these events is slightly touched on in the commencement of this chapter.

More than thirty years since a very near and dear relative of the writer, an elder sister and a second mother, was killed by a fall from a horse in a ride among the very mountains mentioned in this tale. Few of her sex and years were more extensively known or more

universally beloved than the admirable woman who thus fell a victim to the chances of the wilderness. "I do not forget thy kindness," said Marmaduke, "nor that we are of one blood."

"But, my dear father," cried the wondering Elizabeth, "was there actual suffering? Where were the beautiful and fertile vales of the Mohawk? Could they not furnish food for your wants?"

"It was a season of scarcity; the necessities of life commanded a high price in Europe, and were greedily sought after by the speculators. The emigrants from the East to the West invariably passed along the valley of the Mohawk, and swept away the means of subsistence like a swarm of locusts. Nor were the people on the Flats in a much better condition. They were in want themselves, but they spared the little excess of provisions that nature did not absolutely require, with the justice of the German character. There was no grinding of the poor. The word speculator was then unknown to them. I have seen many a stout man, bending under the load of the bag of meal which he was carrying from the mills of the Mohawk, through the rugged passes of these mountains, to feed his half-famished children, with a heart so light, as he approached his hut, that the thirty miles he had passed seemed nothing. Remember, my child, it was in our very infancy; we had neither mills, nor grain, nor roads, nor often clearings; we had nothing of increase but the mouths that were to be fed: for even at that inauspicious moment the restless spirit of emigration was not idle; nay, the general scarcity which extended to the East tended to increase the number of adventurers."

"And how, dearest father, didst thou encounter this dreadful evil?" said Elizabeth, unconsciously adopting the dialect of her parent in the warmth of her sympathy. "Upon thee must have fallen the responsibility, if not the suffering."

"It did, Elizabeth," returned the Judge, pausing for a single moment, as if musing on his former feelings. "I had hundreds at that dreadful time daily looking up to me for bread. The sufferings of their families and the gloomy prospect before them had paralyzed the enterprise and efforts of my settlers; hunger drove them to the woods for food, but despair sent them at night, enfeebled and wan, to a sleepless pillow. It was not a moment for inaction. I purchased cargoes of wheat from the granaries of Pennsylvania; they were landed at Albany and brought up the Mohawk in boats; from thence it was transported on pack-horses into the wilderness and distributed among my people. Seines were made, and the lakes and rivers were dragged for fish. Something like a miracle was wrought in our favor, for enormous shoals of herrings were discovered to have wandered five hundred miles through the windings of the impetuous Susquehanna, and the lake was alive with their numbers. These were at length caught and dealt out to the people, with proper portions of salt, and from that moment we again began to prosper." \*

\* All this was literally true.

"Yes," cried Richard, "and I was the man who served out the fish and salt. When the poor devils came to receive their rations, Benjamin, who was my deputy, was obliged to keep them off by stretching ropes around me, for they smelt so of garlic, from eating nothing but the wild onion, that the fumes put me out often in my measurement. You were a child then, Bess, and knew nothing of the matter, for great care was observed to keep both you and your mother from suffering. That year put me back dreadfully, both in the breed of my hogs and of my turkeys."

"No, Bess," cried the Judge, in a more cheerful tone, disregarding the interruption of his cousin, "he who hears of the settlement of a country knows but little of the toil and suffering by which it is accomplished. Unimproved and wild as this district now seems to your eyes, what was it when I first entered the hills? I left my party, the morning of my arrival, near the farms of the Cherry Valley, and, following a deer-path, rode to the summit of the mountain that I have since called Mount Vision; for the sight that there met my eyes seemed to me as the deceptions of a dream. The fire had run over the pinnacle, and in a great measure laid open the view. The leaves were fallen, and I mounted a tree and sat for an hour looking on the silent wilderness. Not an opening was to be seen in the boundless forest except where the lake lay, like a mirror of glass. The water was covered by myriads of the wild-fowl that migrate with the changes in the season; and while in my situation on the branch of the beech, I saw a bear, with her cubs, descend to the shore to drink. I had met many deer, gliding through the woods, in my journey; but not the vestige of a man could I trace during my progress, nor from my elevated observatory. No clearing, no hut, none of the winding roads that are now to be seen, were there; nothing but mountains rising behind mountains; and the valley, with its surface of branches enlivened here and there with the faded foliage of some tree that parted from its leaves with more than ordinary reluctance. Even the Susquehanna was then hid by the height and density of the forest."

"And were you alone?" asked Elizabeth: "passed you the night in that solitary state?"

"Not so, my child," returned the father. "After musing on the scene for an hour, with a mingled feeling of pleasure and desolation, I left my perch and descended the mountain. My horse was left to browse on the twigs that grew within his reach, while I explored the shores of the lake and the spot where Templeton stands. A pine of more than ordinary growth stood where my dwelling is now placed! A wind-row had been opened through the trees from thence to the lake, and my view was but little impeded. Under the branches of that tree I made my solitary dinner. I had just finished my repast as I saw smoke curling from under the mountain, near the eastern bank of the lake. It was the only indication of the vicinity of man that I had then seen. After much toil I made my way to the spot, and found a rough cabin of logs, built against the foot of a rock, and bearing the marks of a tenant, though I found no one within it—"

"It was the hut of Leather-Stocking," said Edwards quickly.

"It was; though I at first supposed it to be a habitation of the Indians. But while I was lingering around the spot Natty made his appearance, staggering under the carcass of a buck that he had slain. Our acquaintance commenced at that time; before, I had never heard that such a being tenanted the woods. He launched his bark canoe and set me across the foot of the lake to the place where I had fastened my horse, and pointed out a spot where he might get a scanty browsing until the morning; when I returned and passed the night in the cabin of the hunter."

Miss Temple was so much struck by the deep attention of young Edwards during this speech that she forgot to resume her interrogations; but the youth himself continued the discourse by asking:

"And how did the Leather-Stocking discharge the duties of a host sir?"

"Why, simply but kindly, until late in the evening, when he discovered my name and object, and the cordiality of his manner very

sensibly diminished, or, I might better say, disappeared. He considered the introduction of the settlers as an innovation on his rights, I believe for he expressed much dissatisfaction at the measure, though it was in his confused and ambiguous manner. I hardly understood his objections myself, but supposed they referred chiefly to an interruption of the hunting."

"Had you then purchased the estate, or were you examining it with an intent to buy?" asked Edwards, a little abruptly.

"It had been mine for several years. It was with a view to People the land that I visited the lake. Natty treated me hospitably, but coldly, I thought, after he learned the nature of my journey. I slept on his own bear—skin, however, and in the morning joined my surveyors again."

"Said he nothing of the Indian rights, sir? The Leather-Stocking is much given to impeach the justice of the tenure by which the whites hold the country."

"I remember that he spoke of them, but I did not nearly comprehend him, and may have forgotten what he said; for the Indian title was extinguished so far back as the close of the old war, and if it had not been at all, I hold under the patents of the Royal Governors, confirmed by an act of our own State Legislature, and no court in the country can affect my title."

"Doubtless, sir, your title is both legal and equitable," returned the youth coldly, reining his horse back and remaining silent till the subject was changed.

It was seldom Mr. Jones suffered any conversation to continue for a great length of time without his participation. It seems that he was of the party that Judge Temple had designated as his surveyors; and he embraced the opportunity of the pause that succeeded the retreat of young Edwards to take up the discourse, and with a narration of their further proceedings, after his own manner. As it wanted, however, the interest that had accompanied the description of the Judge, we must decline the task of committing his sentences to paper.

They soon reached the point where the promised view was to be seen. It was one of those picturesque and peculiar scenes that belong to the Otsego, but which required the absence of the ice and the softness of a summer's landscape to be enjoyed in all its beauty. Marmaduke had early forewarned his daughter of the season, and of its effect on the prospect; and after casting a cursory glance at its capabilities, the party returned homeward, perfectly satisfied that its beauties would repay them for the toil of a second ride at a more propitious season.

"The spring is the gloomy time of the American year," said the Judge, "and it is more peculiarly the case in these mountains. The winter seems to retreat to the fast nesses of the hills, as to the citadel of its dominion, and is only expelled after a tedious siege, in which either party, at times, would seem to be gaining the victory."

"A very just and apposite figure, Judge Temple," observed the sheriff; "and the garrison under the command of Jack Frost make formidable sorties—you understand what I mean by sorties, monsieur; sallies, in English—and sometimes drive General Spring and his troops back again into the low countries."

"Yes sair," returned the Frenchman, whose prominent eyes were watching the precarious footsteps of the beast he rode, as it picked its dangerous way among the roots of trees, holes, log bridges, and sloughs that formed the aggregate of the highway. "Je vous entends; de low countrie is freeze up for half de year."

The error of Mr. Le Quoi was not noticed by the sheriff; and the rest of the party were yielding to the influence of the changeable season, which was already teaching the equestrians that a continuance of its mildness was not to be expected for any length of time. Silence and thoughtfulness succeeded the gayety and conversation that had prevailed during the commencement of the ride, as clouds began to gather about the heavens, apparently collecting from every quarter, in quick motion, without the agency of a breath of air,

While riding over one of the cleared eminencies that occurred in their route, the watchful eye of Judge Temple pointed out to his daughter the approach of a tempest. Flurries of snow already obscured the mountain that formed the northern boundary of the lake, and the genial sensation which had quickened the blood through their veins was already succeeded by the deadening influence of an approaching northwester.

All of the party were now busily engaged in making the best of their way to the village, though the badness of the roads frequently compelled them to check the impatience of their animals, which often carried them over places that would not admit of any gait faster than a walk.

Richard continued in advance, followed by Mr. Le Quoi; next to whom rode Elizabeth, who seemed to have imbibed the distance which pervaded the manner of young Edwards since the termination of the discourse between the latter and her father. Marmaduke followed his daughter, giving her frequent and tender warnings as to the management of her horse. It was, possibly, the evident dependence that Louisa Grant placed on his assistance which induced the youth to continue by her side, as they pursued their way through a dreary and dark wood, where the rays of the sun could but rarely penetrate, and where even the daylight was obscured and rendered gloomy by the deep forests that surrounded them. No wind had yet reached the spot where the equestrians were in motion, but that dead silence that often precedes a storm contributed to render their situation more irksome than if they were already subject to the fury of the tempest. Suddenly the voice of young Edwards was heard shouting in those appalling tones that carry alarm to the very soul, and which curdle the blood of those that hear them.

"A tree! a tree! Whip—spur for your lives! a tree! a tree!"

"A tree! a tree!" echoed Richard, giving his horse a blow that caused the alarmed beast to jump nearly a rod, throwing the mud and water into the air like a hurricane.

"Von tree! von tree!" shouted the Frenchman, bending his body on the neck of his charger, shutting his eyes, and playing on the ribs of his beast with his heels at a rate that caused him to be conveyed on the crupper of the sheriff with a marvellous speed.

Elizabeth checked her filly and looked up, with an unconscious but alarmed air, at the very cause of their danger, while she listened to the crackling sounds that awoke the stillness of the forest; but the next instant her bridle was seized by her father, who cried, "God

protect my child!" and she felt herself hurried onward, impelled by the vigor of his nervous arm.

Each one of the party bowed to his saddle-bows as the tearing of branches was succeeded by a sound like the rushing of the winds, which was followed by a thundering report, and a shock that caused the very earth to tremble as one of the noblest ruins of the forest fell directly across their path.

One glance was enough to assure Judge Temple that his daughter and those in front of him were safe, and he turned his eyes, in dreadful anxiety, to learn the fate of the others. Young Edwards was on the opposite side of the tree, his form thrown back in his saddle to its utmost distance, his left hand drawing up his bridle with its greatest force, while the right grasped that of Miss Grant so as to draw the head of her horse under its body. Both the animals stood shaking in every joint with terror, and snorting fearfully. Louisa herself had relinquished her reins, and, with her hands pressed on her face, sat bending forward in her saddle, in an attitude of despair, mingled strangely with resignation.

"Are you safe?" cried the Judge, first breaking the awful silence of the moment.

"By God's blessing," returned the youth; "but if there had been branches to the tree we must have been lost—"

He was interrupted by the figure of Louisa slowly yielding in her saddle, and but for his arm she would have sunk to the earth. Terror, however, was the only injury that the clergyman's daughter had sustained, and, with the aid of Elizabeth, she was soon restored to her senses. After some little time was lost in recovering her strength, the young lady was replaced in her saddle, and supported on either side by Judge Temple and Mr. Edwards she was enabled to follow the party in their slow progress.

"The sudden fallings of the trees," said Marmaduke, "are the most dangerous accidents in the forest, for they are not to be foreseen, being impelled by no winds, nor any extraneous or visible cause against which we can guard."

"The reason of their falling, Judge Temple, is very obvious," said the sheriff. "The tree is old and decayed, and it is gradually weakened by the frosts, until a line drawn from the centre of gravity falls without its base, and then the tree comes of a certainty; and I should like to know what greater compulsion there can be for any thing than a mathematical certainty. I studied math—"

"Very true, Richard," interrupted Marmaduke; "thy reasoning is true, and, if my memory be not over-treacherous, was furnished by myself on a former occasion, But how is one to guard against the danger? Canst thou go through the forests measuring the bases and calculating the centres of the oaks? Answer me that, friend Jones, and I will say thou wilt do the country a service."

"Answer thee that, friend Temple!" returned Richard; "a well-educated man can answer thee anything, sir. Do any trees fall in this manner but such as are decayed? Take care not to approach the roots of a rotten tree, and you will be safe enough."

"That would be excluding us entirely from the forests," said Marmaduke. "But, happily, the winds usually force down most of these dangerous ruins, as their currents are admitted into the woods by the surrounding clearings, and such a fall as this has been is very rare."

Louisa by this time had recovered so much strength as to allow the party to proceed at a quicker pace, but long before they were safely housed they were overtaken by the storm; and when they dismounted at the door of the mansion-house, the black plumes of Miss Temple's hat were drooping with the weight of a load of damp snow, and the coats of the gentlemen were powdered with the same material.

While Edwards was assisting Louisa from her horse, the warm-hearted girl caught his hand with fervor and whispered:

"Now, Mr. Edwards, both father and daughter owe their lives to you."

A driving northwesterly storm succeeded, and before the sun was set every vestige of spring had vanished; the lake, the mountains, the village, and the fields being again hidden under one dazzling coat of snow.

## CHAPTER XXII

"Men, boys, and girls  
Desert the unpeopled village; and wild crowds  
Spread o'er the plain, by the sweet phrensy driven."  
—Somerville.

From this time to the close of April the weather continued to be a succession of neat and rapid changes. One day the soft airs of spring seemed to be stealing along the valley, and, in unison with an invigorating sun, attempting covertly to rouse the dormant powers of the vegetable world, while, on the next, the surly blasts from the north would sweep across the lake and erase every impression left by their gentle adversaries. The snow, however, finally disappeared, and the green wheat fields were seen in every direction, spotted with the dark and charred stumps that had, the preceding season, supported some of the proudest trees of the forest. Ploughs were in motion, wherever those useful implements could be used, and the smokes of the sugar-camps were no longer seen issuing from the woods of maple. The lake had lost the beauty of a field of ice, but still a dark and gloomy covering concealed its waters, for the absence of currents left them yet hidden under a porous crust, which, saturated with the fluid, barely retained enough strength to preserve the continuity of its parts. Large flocks of wild geese were seen passing over the country, which hovered, for a time, around the hidden sheet of water, apparently searching for a resting-place; and then, on finding them selves excluded by the chill covering, would soar away to the north, filling the air with discordant screams, as if venting their complaints at the tardy operations of Nature.

For a week, the dark covering of the Otsego was left to the undisturbed possession of two eagles, who alighted on the centre of its field, and sat eyeing their undisputed territory. During the presence of these monarchs of the air, the flocks of migrating birds avoided crossing the plain of ice by turning into the hills, apparently seeking the protection of the forests, while the white and bald heads of the tenants of the lake were turned upward, with a look of contempt. But the time had come when even these kings of birds were to be dispossessed. An opening had been gradually increasing at the lower extremity of the lake, and around the dark spot where the current of the river prevented the formation of ice during even the coldest weather; and the fresh southerly winds, that now breathed freely upon the valley, made an impression on the waters. Mimic waves began to curl over the margin of the frozen field, which exhibited an outline of crystallizations that slowly receded toward the north. At each step the power of the winds and the waves increased, until, after a struggle of a few hours, the turbulent little billows succeeded in setting the whole field in motion, when it was driven beyond the reach of the eye, with a rapidity that was as magical as the change produced in the scene by this expulsion of the lingering remnant of winter. Just as the last sheet of agitated ice was disappearing in the distance, the eagles rose, and soared with a wide sweep above the clouds, while the waves tossed their little caps of snow in the air, as if rioting in their release from a thralldom of five minutes' duration.

The following morning Elizabeth was awakened by the exhilarating sounds of the martens, who were quarrelling and chattering around the little boxes suspended above her windows, and the cries of Richard, who was calling in tones animating as signs of the season itself:

"Awake! awake! my fair lady! the gulls are hovering over the lake already, and the heavens are alive with pigeons. You may look an hour before you can find a hole through which to get a peep at the sun. Awake! awake! lazy ones! Benjamin is overhauling the ammunition, and we only wait for our breakfasts, and away for the mountains and pigeon-shooting."

There was no resisting this animated appeal, and in a few minutes Miss Temple and her friend descended to the parlor. The doors of the hall were thrown open, and the mild, balmy air of a clear spring morning was ventilating the apartment, where the vigilance of the ex-steward had been so long maintaining an artificial heat with such unremitted diligence. The gentlemen were impatiently waiting for their morning's repast, each equipped in the garb of a sportsman. Mr. Jones made many visits to the southern door, and would cry:

"See, Cousin Bess! see, 'Duke, the pigeon-roosts of the south have broken up! They are growing more thick every instant, Here is a flock that the eye cannot see the end of. There is food enough in it to keep the army of Xerxes for a month, and feathers enough to make beds for the whole country. Xerxes, Mr. Edwards, was a Grecian king, who—no, he was a Turk, or a Persian, who wanted to conquer Greece, just the same as these rascals will overrun our wheat fields, when they come back in the fall. Away! away! Bess; I long to pepper them."

In this wish both Marmaduke and young Edwards seemed equally to participate, for the sight was exhilarating to a sportsman; and the ladies soon dismissed the party after a hasty breakfast.

If the heavens were alive with pigeons, the whole village seemed equally in motion with men, women, and children. Every species of firearm, from the French ducking gun, with a barrel near six feet in length, to the common horseman's pistol, was to be seen in the hands of the men and boys; while bows and arrows, some made of the simple stick of walnut sapling and others in a rude imitation of the ancient cross-bows, were carried by many of the latter.

The houses and the signs of life apparent in the village drove the alarmed birds from the direct line of their flight, toward the mountains, along the sides and near the bases of which they were glancing in dense masses, equally wonderful by the rapidity of their motion and their incredible numbers.

We have already said that, across the inclined plane which fell from the steep ascent of the mountain to the banks of the Susquehanna, ran the highway on either side of which a clearing of many acres had been made at a very early day. Over those clearings, and up the eastern mountain, and along the dangerous path that was cut into its side, the different individuals posted themselves, and in a few moments the attack commenced.

Among the sportsmen was the tall, gaunt form of Leather-Stocking, walking over the field, with his rifle hanging on his arm, his dogs at his heels; the latter now scenting the dead or wounded birds that were beginning to tumble from the flocks, and then crouching

under the legs of their master, as if they participated in his feelings at this wasteful and unsportsmanlike execution.

The reports of the firearms became rapid, whole volleys rising from the plain, as flocks of more than ordinary numbers darted over the opening, shadowing the field like a cloud; and then the light smoke of a single piece would issue from among the leafless bushes on the mountain, as death was hurled on the retreat of the affrighted birds, who were rising from a volley, in a vain effort to escape. Arrows and missiles of every kind were in the midst of the flocks; and so numerous were the birds, and so low did they take their flight, that even long poles in the hands of those on the sides of the mountain were used to strike them to the earth.

During all this time Mr. Jones, who disdained the humble and ordinary means of destruction used by his companions, was busily occupied, aided by Benjamin, in making arrangements for an assault of more than ordinarily fatal character. Among the relics of the old military excursions, that occasionally are discovered throughout the different districts of the western part of New York, there had been found in Templeton, at its settlement, a small swivel, which would carry a ball of a pound weight. It was thought to have been deserted by a war-party of the whites in one of their inroads into the Indian settlements, when, perhaps, convenience or their necessity induced them to leave such an incumbrance behind them in the woods. This miniature cannon had been released from the rust, and being mounted on little wheels was now in a state for actual service. For several years it was the sole organ for extraordinary rejoicings used in those mountains. On the mornings of the Fourth of July it would be heard ringing among the hills; and even Captain Hollister, who was the highest authority in that part of the country on all such occasions, affirmed that, considering its dimensions, it was no despicable gun for a salute. It was somewhat the worse for the service it had performed, it is true, there being but a trifling difference in size between the touch-hole and the muzzle. Still, the grand conceptions of Richard had suggested the importance of such an instrument in hurling death at his nimble enemies. The swivel was dragged by a horse into a part of the open space that the sheriff thought most eligible for planning a battery of the kind, and Mr. Pump proceeded to load it. Several handfuls of duck-shot were placed on top of the powder, and the major-domo announced that his piece was ready for service.

The sight of such an implement collected all the idle spectators to the spot, who, being mostly boys, filled the air with cries of exultation and delight. The gun was pointed high, and Richard, holding a coal of fire in a pair of tongs, patiently took his seat on a stump, awaiting the appearance of a flock worthy of his notice.

So prodigious was the number of the birds that the scattering fire of the guns, with the hurling of missiles and the cries of the boys, had no other effect than to break off small flocks from the immense masses that continued to dart along the valley, as if the whole of the feathered tribe were pouring through that one pass. None pretended to collect the game, which lay scattered over the fields in such profusion as to cover the very ground with fluttering victims.

Leather-Stocking was a silent but uneasy spectator of all these proceedings, but was able to keep his sentiments to himself until he saw the introduction of the swivel into the sports.

"This comes of settling a country!" he said. "Here have I known the pigeon to fly for forty long years, and, till you made your clearings, there was nobody to skeart or to hurt them, I loved to see them come into the woods, for they were company to a body, hurting nothing—being, as it was, as harmless as a garter-snake. But now it gives me sore thoughts when I hear the frighty things whizzing through the air, for I know it's only a motion to bring out all the brats of the village. Well, the Lord won't see the waste of his creatures for nothing, and right will be done to the pigeons, as well as others, by and by. There's Mr. Oliver as bad as the rest of them, firing into the flocks as if he was shooting down nothing but Mingo warriors." Among the sportsmen was Billy Kirby, who, armed with an old musket, was loading, and, without even looking into the air, was firing and shouting as his victims fell even on his own person. He heard the speech of Natty, and took upon himself to reply:

"What! old Leather-Stocking," he cried, "grumbling at the loss of a few pigeons! If you had to sow your wheat twice, and three times, as I have done, you wouldn't be so massyfully feeling toward the devils. Hurrah, boys! scatter the feathers! This is better than shooting at a turkey's head and neck, old fellow."

"It's better for you, maybe, Billy Kirby," replied the indignant old hunter, "and all them that don't know how to put a ball down a rifle-barrel, or how to bring it up again with a true aim; but it's wicked to be shooting into flocks in this wasty manner, and none to do it who know how to knock over a single bird. If a body has a craving for pigeon's flesh, why, it's made the same as all other creatures, for man's eating; but not to kill twenty and eat one. When I want such a thing I go into the woods till I find one to my liking, and then I shoot him off the branches, without touching the feather of another, though there might be a hundred on the same tree. You couldn't do such a thing, Billy Kirby—you couldn't do it if you tried."

"What's that, old corn-stalk! you sapless stub!" cried the wood-chopper. "You have grown wordy, since the affair of the turkey; but if you are for a single shot, here goes at that bird which comes on by himself."

The fire from the distant part of the field had driven a single pigeon below the flock to which it belonged, and, frightened with the constant reports of the muskets, it was approaching the spot where the disputants stood, darting first from One side and then to the other, cutting the air with the swiftness of lightning, and making a noise with its wings not unlike the rushing of a bullet. Unfortunately for the wood-chopper, notwithstanding his vaunt, he did not see this bird until it was too late to fire as it approached, and he pulled the trigger at the unlucky moment when it was darting immediately over his head. The bird continued its course with the usual velocity.

Natty lowered his rifle from his arm when the challenge was made, and waiting a moment, until the terrified victim had got in a line with his eye, and had dropped near the bank of the lake, he raised it again with uncommon rapidity, and fired. It might have been chance, or it might have been skill, that produced the result; it was probably a union of both; but the pigeon whirled over in the air, and fell into the lake with a broken wing. At the sound of his rifle, both his dogs started from his feet, and in a few minutes the "slut" brought out the bird, still alive.

The wonderful exploit of Leather-Stocking was noised through the field with great rapidity, and the sportsmen gathered in, to learn the truth of the report.

"What" said young Edwards, "have you really killed a pigeon on the wing, Natty, with a single ball?"

"Haven't I killed loons before now, lad, that dive at the flash?" returned the hunter. "It's much better to kill only such as you want, without wasting your powder and lead, than to be firing into God's creatures in this wicked manner. But I came out for a bird, and you know the reason why I like small game, Mr. Oliver, and now I have got one Twill go home, for I don't relish to see these wasteful ways that you are all practising, as if the least thing wasn't made for use, and not to destroy."

"Thou sayest well, Leather-Stocking," cried Marmaduke, "and I begin to think it time to put an end to this work of destruction."

"Put an ind, Judge, to your clearings. Ain't the woods His work as well as the pigeons? Use, but don't waste. Wasn't the woods made for the beasts and birds to harbor in? and when man wanted their flesh, their skins, or their feathers, there's the place to seek them. But I'll go to the hut with my own game, for I wouldn't touch one of the harmless things that cover the ground here, looking up with their eyes on me, as if they only wanted tongues to say their thoughts." With this sentiment in his month, Leather-Stocking threw his rifle over his arm, and, followed by his dogs, stepped across the clearing with great caution, taking care not to tread on one of the wounded birds in his path. He soon entered the bushes on the margin of the lake and was hid from view.

Whatever impression the morality of Natty made on the Judge, it was utterly lost on Richard. He availed himself of the gathering of the sportsmen, to lay a plan for one "fell swoop" of destruction. The musket-men were drawn up in battle array, in a line extending on each side of his artillery, with orders to await the signal of firing from himself.

"Stand by, my lads," said Benjamin, who acted as an aid de-camp on this occasion, "stand by, my hearties, and when Squire Dickens heaves out the signal to begin firing, d'ye see, you may open upon them in a broadside. Take care and fire low, boys, and you'll be sure to hull the flock."

"Fire low!" shouted Kirby; "hear the old fool! If we fire low, we may hit the stumps, but not ruffle a pigeon."

"How should you know, you lubber?" cried Benjamin, with a very unbecoming heat for an officer on the eve of battle—"how should you know, you grampus? Haven't I sailed aboard of the Boadishy for five years? and wasn't it a standing order to fire low, and to hull your enemy! Keep silence at your guns, boys and mind the order that is passed."

The loud laughs of the musket-men were silenced by the more authoritative voice of Richard, who called for attention and obedience to his signals.

Some millions of pigeons were supposed to have already passed, that morning, over the valley of Templeton; but nothing like the flock that was now approaching had been seen before. It extended from mountain to mountain in one solid blue mass, and the eye looked in vain, over the southern hills, to find its termination. The front of this living column was distinctly marked by a line but very slightly indented, so regular and even was the flight. Even Marmaduke forgot the morality of Leather-Stocking as it approached, and, in common with the rest, brought his musket to a poise.

"Fire!" cried the sheriff, clapping a coal to the priming of the cannon. As half of Benjamin's charge escaped through the touch-hole, the whole volley of the musketry preceded the report of the swivel. On receiving this united discharge of small-arms, the front of the flock darted upward, while, at the same instant, myriads of those in the rear rushed with amazing rapidity into their places, so that, when the column of white smoke gushed from the mouth of the little cannon, an accumulated mass of objects was gliding over its point of direction. The roar of the gun echoed along the mountains, and died away to the north, like distant thunder, while the whole flock of alarmed birds seemed, for a moment, thrown into one disorderly and agitated mass. The air was filled with their irregular flight, layer rising above layer, far above the tops of the highest pines, none daring to advance beyond the dangerous pass; when, suddenly, some of the headers of the feathered tribes shot across the valley, taking their flight directly over the village, and hundreds of thousands in their rear followed the example, deserting the eastern side of the plain to their persecutors and the slain.

"Victory!" shouted Richard, "victory! we have driven the enemy from the field."

"Not so, Dickon," said Marmaduke; "the field is covered with them; and, like the Leather-Stocking, I see nothing but eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror. Full one-half of those that have fallen are yet alive; and I think it is time to end the sport, if sport it be."

"Sport!" cried the sheriff; "it is princely sport! There are some thousands of the blue-coated boys on the ground, so that every old woman in the village may have a pot-pie for the asking."

"Well, we have happily frightened the birds from this side of the valley," said Marmaduke, "and the carnage must of necessity end for the present. Boys, I will give you sixpence a hundred for the pigeons' heads only; so go to work, and bring them into the village."

This expedient produced the desired effect, for every urchin on the ground went industriously to work to wring the necks of the wounded birds. Judge Temple retired toward his dwelling with that kind of feeling that many a man has experienced before him, who discovers, after the excitement of the moment has passed, that he has purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others. Horses were loaded with the dead; and, after this first burst of sporting, the shooting of pigeons became a business, with a few idlers, for the remainder of the season, Richard, however, boasted for many a year of his shot with the "cricket;" and Benjamin gravely asserted that he thought they had killed nearly as many pigeons on that day as there were Frenchmen destroyed on the memorable occasion of Rodney's victory.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Help, masters, help; here's a fish hangs in the net, like a poor  
Man's right in the law."  
—Pericles of Tyre.

The advance of the season now became as rapid as its first approach had been tedious and lingering. The days were uniformly mild, while the nights, though cool, were no longer chilled by frosts. The whip-poor-will was heard whistling his melancholy notes along the margin of the lake, and the ponds and meadows were sending forth the music of their thousand tenants. The leaf of the native poplar was seen quivering in the woods; the sides of the mountains began to lose their hue of brown, as the lively green of the different members of the forest blended their shades with the permanent colors of the pine and hemlock; and even the buds of the tardy oak were swelling with the promise of the coming summer. The gay and fluttering blue-bird, the social robin, and the industrious little wren were all to be seen enlivening the fields with their presence and their songs; while the soaring fish-hawk was already hovering over the waters of the Otsego, watching with native voracity for the appearance of his prey.

The tenants of the lake were far-famed for both their quantities and their quality, and the ice had hardly disappeared before numberless little boats were launched from the shores, and the lines of the fishermen were dropped into the inmost recesses of its deepest caverns, tempting the unwary animals with every variety of bait that the ingenuity or the art of man had invented. But the slow though certain adventures with hook and line were ill suited to the profusion and impatience of the settlers. More destructive means were resorted to; and, as the season had now arrived when the bass fisheries were allowed by the provisions of the law that Judge Temple had procured, the sheriff declared his intention, by availing himself of the first dark night, to enjoy the sport in person.

"And you shall be present, Cousin Bess," he added, when he announced this design, "and Miss Grant, and Mr. Edwards; and I will show you what I call fishing not nibble, nibble, nibble, as 'Duke does when he goes after the salmon-trout. There he will sit for hours, in a broiling sun or, perhaps, over a hole in the lee, in the coldest days in winter, under the lee of a few bushes, and not a fish will he catch, after all this mortification of the flesh. No, no—give me a good seine that's fifty or sixty fathoms in length, with a jolly parcel of boatmen to crack their jokes the while, with Benjamin to steer, and let us haul them in by thousands; I call that fishing."

"Ah! Dickon," cried Marmaduke, "thou knowest but little of the pleasure there is in playing with the hook and line, or thou wouldst be more saving of the game. I have known thee to leave fragments enough behind thee, when thou hast headed a night party on the lake, to feed a dozen famishing families."

"I shall not dispute the matter, Judge Temple; this night will I go; and I invite the company to attend, and then let them decide between us."

Richard was busy during most of the afternoon, making his preparations for the important occasion. Just as the light of the settling sun had disappeared, and a new moon had begun to throw its shadows on the earth, the fisher-men took their departure, in a boat, for a point that was situated on the western shore of the lake, at the distance of rather more than half a mile from the village. The ground had become settled, and the walking was good and dry. Marmaduke, with his daughter, her friend, and young Edwards, continued on the high grassy banks at the outlet of the placid sheet of water, watching the dark object that was moving across the lake, until it entered the shade of the western hills, and was lost to the eye. The distance round by land to the point of destination was a mile, and he observed:

"It is time for us to be moving; the moon will be down ere we reach the point, and then the miraculous hauls of Dickon will commence."

The evening was warm, and, after the long and dreary winter from which they had just escaped, delightfully invigorating. Inspired by the scene and their anticipated amusement, the youthful companions of the Judge followed his steps, as he led them along the shores of the Otsego, and through the skirts of the village.

"See!" said young Edwards, "they are building their fire already; it glimmers for a moment, and dies again like the light of a firefly."

"Now it blazes," cried Elizabeth; "you can perceive figures moving around the light. Oh! I would bet my jewels against the gold beads of Remarkable, that my impatient Cousin Dickon had an agency in raising that bright flame; and see! it fades again, like most of his brilliant schemes."

"Thou hast guessed the truth, Bess," said her father; "he has thrown an armful of brush on the pile, which has burnt out as soon as lighted. But it has enabled them to find a better fuel, for their fire begins to blaze with a more steady flame. It is the true fisherman's beacon now; observe how beautifully it throws its little circle of light on the water!"

The appearance of the fire urged the pedestrians on, for even the ladies had become eager to witness the miraculous draught. By the time they reached the bank, which rose above the low point where the fishermen had landed, the moon had sunk behind the top of the western pines, and, as most of the stars were obscured by clouds, there was but little other light than that which proceeded from the fire. At the suggestion of Marmaduke, his companions paused to listen to the conversation of those below them, and examine the party for a moment before they descended to the shore.

The whole group were seated around the fire, with the exception of Richard and Benjamin; the former of whom occupied the root of a decayed stump, that had been drawn to the spot as part of their fuel, and the latter was standing, with his arms akimbo, so near to the flame that the smoke occasionally obscured his solemn visage, as it waved around the pile in obedience to the night airs that swept gently over the water.

"Why, look you, squire, said the major-domo. You may call a lake-fish that will weigh twenty or thirty pounds a serious matter, but

to a man who has hauled in a shovel-nosed shirk, d'ye see, it's but a poor kind of fishing after all."

"I don't know, Benjamin," returned the sheriff; "a haul of one thousand Otsego bass, without counting pike, pickerel, perch, bull-pouts, salmon-trouts, and suckers, is no bad fishing, let me tell you. There may be sport in sticking a shark, but what is he good for after you have got him? Now, any one of the fish that I have named is fit to set before a king."

"Well, squire," returned Benjamin, "just listen to the philosophy of the thing. Would it stand to reason, that such a fish should live and be caught in this here little pond of water, where it's hardly deep enough to drown a man, as you'll find in the wide ocean, where, as every body knows that is, everybody that has followed the seas, whales and grampuses are to be seen, that are as long as one of the pine-trees on yonder mountain?"

"Softly, softly, Benjamin," said the sheriff, as if he wished to save the credit of his favorite; "why, some of the pines will measure two hundred feet, and even more."

"Two hundred or two thousand, it's all the same thing," cried Benjamin, with an air which manifested that he was not easily to be bullied out of his opinion, on a subject like the present. "Haven't I been there, and haven't I seen? I have said that you fall in with whales as long as one of them there pines: and what I have once said I'll stand to!"

During this dialogue, which was evidently but the close of much longer discussion, the huge frame of Billy Kirby was seen extended on one side of the fire, where he was picking his teeth with splinters of the chips near him, and occasionally shaking his head with distrust of Benjamin's assertions.

"I've a notion," said the wood-chopper, "that there's water in this lake to swim the biggest whale that ever was invented; and, as to the pines, I think I ought to know so'thing consarning them; I have chopped many a one that was sixty times the length of my helve, without counting the eye; and I believe, Benny, that if the old pine that stands in the hollow of the Vision Mountain just over the village—you may see the tree itself by looking up, for the moon is on its top yet—well, now I believe, if that same tree was planted out in the deepest part of the lake, there would be water enough for the biggest ship that ever was built to float over it, without touching its upper branches, I do."

"Did'ee ever see a ship, Master Kirby?" roared the steward, "did'ee ever see a ship, man? or any craft bigger than a lime-scow, or a wood-boat, on this here small bit of fresh water?"

"Yes, I have," said the wood-chopper stoutly; "I can say that I have, and tell no lie."

"Did'ee ever see a British ship, Master Kirby? an English line-of-battle ship, boy? Where did'ee ever fall in with a regular built vessel, with starn-post and cutwater, gar board-streak and plank-shear, gangways, and hatchways, and waterways, quarter-deck, and forecastle, ay, and flush-deck?—tell me that, man, if you can; where away did'ee ever fall in with a full-rigged, regular-built, necked vessel?"

The whole company were a good deal astounded with this overwhelming question, and even Richard afterward remarked that it "was a thousand pities that Benjamin could not read, or he must have made a valuable officer to the British marine. It is no wonder that they overcame the French so easily on the water, when even the lowest sailor so well understood the different parts of a vessel." But Billy Kirby was a fearless wight, and had great jealousy of foreign dictation; he had risen on his feet, and turned his back to the fire, during the voluble delivery of this interrogatory; and when the steward ended, contrary to all expectation, he gave the following spirited reply:

"Where! why, on the North River, and maybe on Champlain. There's sloops on the river, boy, that would give a hard time on't to the stoutest vessel King George owns. They carry masts of ninety feet in the clear of good solid pine, for I've been at the chopping of many a one in Varmount State. I wish I was captain in one of them, and you was in that Board-dish that you talk so much about, and we'd soon see what good Yankee stuff is made on, and whether a Varmounter's hide ain't as thick as an Englishman's." The echoes from the opposite hills, which were more than half a mile from the fishing point, sent back the discordant laugh that Benjamin gave forth at this challenge; and the woods that covered their sides seemed, by the noise that issued from their shades, to be full of mocking demons.

"Let us descend to the shore," whispered Marmaduke, "or there will soon be ill-blood between them. Benjamin is a fearless booster; and Kirby, though good-natured, is a careless son of the forest, who thinks one American more than a match for six Englishmen. I marvel that Dickon is silent, where there is such a trial of skill in the superlative!"

The appearance of Judge Temple and the ladies produced, if not a pacification, at least a cessation of hostilities. Obedient to the directions of Mr. Jones the fishermen prepared to launch their boat, which had been seen in the background of the view, with the net carefully disposed on a little platform in its stern, ready for service. Richard gave vent to his reproaches at the tardiness of the pedestrians, when all the turbulent passions of the party were succeeded by a calm, as mild and as placid as that which prevailed over the beautiful sheet of water that they were about to rifle of its best treasures.

The night had now become so dark as to render objects, without the reach of the light of the fire, not only indistinct, but in most cases invisible. For a little distance the water was discernible, glistening, as the glare from the fire danced over its surface, touching it here and there with red quivering streaks; but, at a hundred feet from the shore, there lay a boundary of impenetrable gloom. One or two stars were shining through the openings of the clouds, and the lights were seen in the village, glimmering faintly, as if at an immeasurable distance. At times, as the fire lowered, or as the horizon cleared, the outline of the mountain, on the other side of the lake, might be traced by its undulations; but its shadow was cast, wide and dense, on the bosom of the water, rendering the darkness in that direction trebly deep.

Benjamin Pump was invariably the coxswain and net caster of Richard's boat, unless the sheriff saw fit to preside in person: and, on the present occasion, Billy Kirby, and a youth of about half his strength, were assigned to the oars. The remainder of the assistants were stationed at the drag-ropes. The arrangements were speedily made, and Richard gave the signal to "shove off."

Elizabeth watched the motion of the batteau as it pulled from the shore, letting loose its rope as it went, but it soon disappeared in

the darkness, when the ear was her only guide to its evolutions. There was great affectation of stillness during all these manoeuvres, in order, as Richard assured them, "not to frighten the bass, who were running into the shoal waters, and who would approach the light if not disturbed by the sounds from the fishermen."

The hoarse voice of Benjamin was alone heard issuing out of the gloom, as he uttered, in authoritative tones, "Pull larboard oar," "Pull starboard," "Give way together, boys," and such other indicative mandates as were necessary for the right disposition of his seine. A long time was passed in this necessary part of the process, for Benjamin prided himself greatly on his skill in throwing the net, and, in fact, most of the success of the sport depended on its being done with judgment. At length a loud splash in the water, as he threw away the "staff," or "stretcher," with a hoarse call from the steward of "Clear," announced that the boat was returning; when Richard seized a brand from the fire, and ran to a point as far above the centre of the fishing-ground, as the one from which the batteau had started was below it.

"Stick her in dead for the squire, boys," said the steward, "and we'll have a look at what grows in this here pond."

In place of the falling net were now to be heard the quick strokes of the oars, and the noise of the rope running out of the boat. Presently the batteau shot into the circle of light, and in an instant she was pulled to the shore. Several eager hands were extended to receive the line, and, both ropes being equally well manned, the fishermen commenced hauling in with slow, and steady drags, Richard standing to the centre, giving orders, first to one party, and then to the other, to increase or slacken their efforts, as occasion required. The visitors were posted near him, and enjoyed a fair view of the whole operation, which was slowly advancing to an end.

Opinions as to the result of their adventure were now freely hazarded by all the men, some declaring that the net came in as light as a feather, and others affirming that it seemed to be full of logs. As the ropes were many hundred feet in length, these opposing sentiments were thought to be of little moment by the sheriff, who would go first to one line, and then to the other, giving each small pull, in order to enable him to form an opinion for himself.

"Why, Benjamin," he cried, as he made his first effort in this way, "you did not throw the net clear. I can move it with my little finger. The rope slackens in my hand."

"Did you ever see a whale, squire?" responded the steward: "I say that, if that there net is foul, the devil is in the lake in the shape of a fish, for I cast it as far as ever rigging was rove over the quarter-deck of a flag-ship."

But Richard discovered his mistake, when he saw Billy Kirby before him, standing with his feet in the water, at an angle of forty-five degrees, inclining southward, and expending his gigantic strength in sustaining himself in that posture. He ceased his remonstrances, and proceeded to the party at the other line.

"I see the 'staffs,'" shouted Mr. Jones—"gather in boys, and away with it; to shore with her!—to shore with her!"

At this cheerful sound, Elizabeth strained her eyes and saw the ends of the two sticks on the seine emerging from the darkness, while the men closed near to each other, and formed a deep bag of their net. The exertions of the fishermen sensibly increased, and the voice of Richard was heard encouraging them to make their greatest efforts at the present moment.

"Now's the time, my lads," he cried; "let us get the ends to land, and all we have will be our own—away with her!"

"Away with her, it is," echoed Benjamin!—"hurrah! ho-a-hay, ho-a-hoy, ho-a!"

"In with her," shouted Kirby, exerting himself in a manner that left nothing for those in his rear to do, but to gather up the slack of the rope which passed through his hands.

"Staff, ho!" shouted the steward.

"Staff, ho!" echoed Kirby, from the other rope. The men rushed to the water's edge, some seizing the upper rope, and some the lower or lead rope, and began to haul with great activity and zeal. A deep semicircular sweep of the little balls that supported the seine in its perpendicular position was plainly visible to the spectators, and, as it rapidly lessened in size, the bag of the net appeared, while an occasional flutter on the water announced the uneasiness of the prisoners it contained.

"Haul in, my lads," shouted Richard—"I can see the dogs kicking to get free. Haul in, and here's a cast that will pay for the labor." Fishes of various sorts were now to be seen, entangled in the meshes of the net, as it was passed through the hands of the laborers; and the water, at a little distance from the shore, was alive with the movements of the alarmed victims. Hundreds of white sides were glancing up to the surface of the water, and glistening in the fire light, when, frightened at the uproar and the change, the fish would again dart to the bottom, in fruitless efforts for freedom. "Hurrah!" shouted Richard: "one or two more heavy drags, boys, and we are safe."

"Cheerily, boys, cheerily!" cried Benjamin; "I see a salmon-trout that is big enough for a chowder."

"Away with you, you varmint!" said Billy Kirby, plucking a bullpout from the meshes, and casting the animal back into the lake with contempt. "Pull, boys, pull; here's all kinds, and the Lord condemn me for a liar, if there ain't a thousand bass!"

Inflamed beyond the bounds of discretion at the sight, and forgetful of the season, the wood-chopper rushed to his middle into the water, and began to drive the reluctant animals before him from their native element.

"Pull heartily, boys," cried Marmaduke, yielding to the excitement of the moment, and laying his hands to the net, with no trifling addition to the force. Edwards had preceded him; for the sight of the immense piles of fish, that were slowly rolling over on the gravelly beach, had impelled him also to leave the ladies and join the fishermen.

Great care was observed in bringing the net to land, and, after much toil, the whole shoal of victims was safely deposited in a hollow of the bank, where they were left to flutter away their brief existence in the new and fatal element.

Even Elizabeth and Louisa were greatly excited and highly gratified by seeing two thousand captives thus drawn from the bosom of the lake, and laid prisoners at their feet. But when the feelings of the moment were passing away, Marmaduke took in his hands a bass, that might have weighed two pounds, and after viewing it a moment, in melancholy musing, he turned to his daughter, and observed:

“This is a fearful expenditure of the choicest gifts of Providence. These fish, Bess, which thou seest lying in such piles before thee, and which by to-morrow evening will be rejected food on the meanest table in Templeton, are of a quality and flavor that, in other countries, would make them esteemed a luxury on the tables of princes or epicures. The world has no better fish than the bass of Otsego; it unites the richness of the shad\* to the firmness of the salmon.”

\* Of all the fish the writer has ever tasted, he thinks the one in question the best.

“But surely, dear sir,” cried Elizabeth, “they must prove a great blessing to the country, and a powerful friend to the poor.”

“The poor are always prodigal, my child, where there is plenty, and seldom think of a provision against the morrow. But, if there can be any excuse for destroying animals in this manner, it is in taking the bass. During the winter, you know, they are entirely protected from our assaults by the ice, for they refuse the hook; and during the hot months they are not seen. It is supposed they retreat to the deep and cool waters of the lake, at that season; and it is only in the spring and autumn that, for a few days, they are to be found around the points where they are within the reach of a seine. But, like all the other treasures of the wilderness, they already begin to disappear before the wasteful extravagance of man.”

“Disappear, Duke! disappear!” exclaimed the sheriff “if you don't call this appearing, I know not what you will. Here are a good thousand of the shiners, some hundreds of suckers, and a powerful quantity of other fry. But this is always the way with you, Marmaduke: first it's the trees, then it's the deer; after that it's the maple sugar, and so on to the end of the chapter. One day you talk of canals through a country where there's a river or a lake every half-mile, just because the water won't run the way you wish it to go; and, the next, you say some thing about mines of coal, though any man who has good eyes like myself—I say, with good eyes—can see more wood than would keep the city of London in fuel for fifty years; wouldn't it, Benjamin?”

“Why, for that, squire,” said the steward, “Lon'on is no small place. If it was stretched an end, all the same as a town on one side of the river, it would cover some such matter as this here lake. Thof I dar'st to say, that the wood in sight might sarve them a good turn, seeing that the Lon'oners mainly burn coal.”

“Now we are on the subject of coal, Judge Temple,” interrupted the sheriff, “I have a thing of much importance to communicate to you; but I will defer it—until tomorrow. I know that you intend riding into the eastern part of the Patent, and I will accompany you, and conduct you to a spot where some of your projects may be realized. We will say no more now, for there are listeners; but a secret has this evening been revealed to me, 'Duke, that is of more consequence to your welfare than all your estate united.’”

Marmaduke laughed at the important intelligence, to which in a variety of shapes he was accustomed, and the sheriff, with an air of great dignity, as if pitying his want of faith, proceeded in the business more immediately before them. As the labor of drawing the net had been very great, he directed one party of his men to commence throwing the fish into piles, preparatory to the usual division, while another, under the superintendence of Benjamin, prepared the seine for a second haul.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"While from its margin, terrible to tell,  
Three sailors with their gallant boatswain fell."  
—Falconer.

While the fishermen were employed in making the preparations for an equitable division of the spoil, Elizabeth and her friend strolled a short distance from the group, along the shore of the lake. After reaching a point to which even the brightest of the occasional gleams of the fire did not extend, they turned, and paused a moment, in contemplation of the busy and lively party they had left, and of the obscurity which, like the gloom of oblivion, seemed to envelop the rest of the creation.

"This is indeed a subject for the pencil!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "Observe the countenance of that woodchopper, while he exults in presenting a larger fish than common to my cousin sheriff; and see, Louisa, how hand some and considerate my dear father looks, by the light of that fire, where he stands viewing the havoc of the game. He seems melancholy, as if he actually thought that a day of retribution was to follow this hour of abundance and prodigality! Would they not make a picture, Louisa?"

"You know that I am ignorant of all such accomplishments, Miss Temple."

"Call me by my Christian name," interrupted Elizabeth; "this is not a place, neither is this a scene, for forms."

"Well, then, if I may venture an opinion," said Louisa timidly, "I should think it might indeed make a picture. The selfish earnestness of that Kirby over his fish would contrast finely with the—the—expression of Mr. Edwards' face. I hardly know what to call it; but it is—a—is—you know what I would say, dear Elizabeth."

"You do me too much credit, Miss Grant," said the heiress; "I am no diviner of thoughts, or interpreter of expressions."

There was certainly nothing harsh or even cold in the manner of the speaker, but still it repressed the conversation, and they continued to stroll still farther from the party, retaining each other's arm, but observing a profound silence. Elizabeth, perhaps conscious of the improper phraseology of her last speech, or perhaps excited by the new object that met her gaze, was the first to break the awkward cessation in the discourse, by exclaiming:

"Look, Louisa! we are not alone; there are fishermen lighting a fire on the other side of the lake, immediately opposite to us; it must be in front of the cabin of Leather-Stocking!"

Through the obscurity, which prevailed most immediately under the eastern mountain, a small and uncertain light was plainly to be seen, though, as it was occasionally lost to the eye, it seemed struggling for existence. They observed it to move, and sensibly to lower, as it carried down the descent of the bank to the shore. Here, in a very short time, its flame gradually expanded, and grew brighter, until it became of the size of a man's head, when it continued to shine a steady ball of fire. Such an object, lighted as it were by magic, under the brow of the mountain, and in that retired and unfrequented place, gave double interest to the beauty and singularity of its appearance. It did not at all resemble the large and unsteady light of their own fire, being much more clear and bright, and retaining its size and shape with perfect uniformity.

There are moments when the best-regulated minds are more or less subjected to the injurious impressions which few have escaped in infancy; and Elizabeth smiled at her own weakness, while she remembered the idle tales which were circulated through the village, at the expense of the Leather-Stocking. The same ideas seized her companion, and at the same instant, for Louisa pressed nearer to her friend, as she said in a low voice, stealing a timid glance toward the bushes and trees that overhung the bank near them:

"Did you ever hear the singular ways of this Natty spoken of, Miss Temple? They say that, in his youth, he was an Indian warrior; or, what is the same thing, a white man leagued with the savages; and it is thought he has been concerned in many of their inroads, in the old wars."

"The thing is not at all improbable," returned Elizabeth; "he is not alone in that particular."

"No, surely; but is it not strange that he is so cautious with his hut? He never leaves it, without fastening it in a remarkable manner; and in several instances, when the children, or even the men of the village, have wished to seek a shelter there from the storms, he has been known to drive them from his door with rudeness and threats. That surely is singular to this country!"

"It is certainly not very hospitable; but we must remember his aversion to the customs of civilized life. You heard my father say, a few days since, how kindly he was treated by him on his first visit to his place." Elizabeth paused, and smiled, with an expression of peculiar archness, though the darkness hid its meaning from her companion, as she continued: "Besides, he certainly admits the visits of Mr. Edwards, whom we both know to be far from a savage."

To this speech Louisa made no reply, but continued gazing on the object which had elicited her remarks. In addition to the bright and circular flame, was now to be seen a fainter, though a vivid light, of an equal diameter to the other at the upper end, but which, after extending downward for many feet, gradually tapered to a point at its lower extremity. A dark space was plainly visible between the two, and the new illumination was placed beneath the other, the whole forming an appearance not unlike an inverted note of admiration. It was soon evident that the latter was nothing but the reflection, from the water, of the former, and that the object, whatever it might be, was advancing across, or rather over the lake, for it seemed to be several feet above its surface, in a direct line with themselves. Its motion was amazingly rapid, the ladies having hardly discovered that it was moving at all, before the waving light of a flame was discerned, losing its regular shape, while it increased in size, as it approached.

"It appears to be supernatural!" whispered Louisa, beginning to retrace her steps toward the party.

"It is beautiful!" exclaimed Elizabeth,

A brilliant though waving flame was now plainly visible, gracefully gliding over the lake, and throwing its light on the water in such a manner as to tinge it slightly though in the air, so strong was the contrast, the darkness seemed to have the distinctness of material substances, as if the fire were imbedded in a setting of ebony. This appearance, however, gradually wore off, and the rays from the torch struck out, and enlightened the atmosphere in front of it, leaving the background in a darkness that was more impenetrable than ever.

"Ho! Natty, is that you?" shouted the sheriff. "Paddle in, old boy, and I'll give you a mess of fish that is fit to place before the governor."

The light suddenly changed its direction, and a long and slightly built boat hove up out of the gloom, while the red glare fell on the weather-beaten features of the Leather-Stocking, whose tall person was seen erect in the frail vessel, wielding, with the grace of an experienced boatman, a long fishing-spear, which he held by its centre, first dropping one end and then the other into the water, to aid in propelling the little canoe of bark, we will not say through, but over, the water. At the farther end of the vessel a form was faintly seen, guiding its motions, and using a paddle with the ease of one who felt there was no necessity for exertion. The Leather-Stocking struck his spear lightly against the short staff which up held, on a rude grating framed of old hoops of iron, the knots of pine that composed the fuel, and the light, which glared high, for an instant fell on the swarthy features and dark, glancing eyes of Mohegan.

The boat glided along the shore until it arrived opposite the fishing-ground, when it again changed its direction and moved on to the land, with a motion so graceful, and yet so rapid, that it seemed to possess the power of regulating its own progress. The water in front of the canoe was hardly ruffled by its passage and no sound betrayed the collision, when the light fabric shot on the gravelly beach for nearly half its length, Natty receding a step or two from its bow, in order to facilitate the landing.

"Approach, Mohegan," said Marmaduke; "approach, Leather-Stocking, and load your canoe with bass. It would be a shame to assail the animals with the spear, when such multitudes of victims lie here, that will be lost as food for the want of mouths to consume them."

"No, no, Judge," returned Natty, his tall figure stalking over the narrow beach, and ascending to the little grassy bottom where the fish were laid in piles; "I eat of no man's wasty ways. I strike my spear into the eels or the trout, when I crave the creatur'; but I wouldn't be helping to such a sinful kind of fishing for the best rifle that was ever brought out from the old countries. If they had fur, like the beaver, or you could tan their hides, like a buck, something might be said in favor of taking them by the thousand with your nets; but as God made them for man's food, and for no other disarnable reason, I call it sinful and wasty to catch more than can be eat."

"Your reasoning is mine; for once, old hunter, we agree in opinion; and I heartily wish we could make a convert of the sheriff. A net of half the size of this would supply the whole village with fish for a week at one haul."

The Leather-Stocking did not relish this alliance in sentiment; and he shook his head doubtingly as he answered;

"No, no; we are not much of one mind, Judge, or you'd never turn good hunting-grounds into stumpy pastures. And you fish and hunt out of rule; but, to me, the flesh is sweeter where the creatur' has some chance for its life; for that reason, I always use a single ball, even if it be at a bird or a squirrel. Besides, it saves lead; for, when a body knows how to shoot, one piece of lead is enough for all, except hard-lived animals."

The sheriff heard these opinions with great indignation; and when he completed the last arrangement for the division, by carrying with his own hands a trout of a large size, and placing it on four different piles in succession, as his vacillating ideas of justice required, gave vent to his spleen.

"A very pretty confederacy, indeed! Judge Temple, the landlord and owner of a township, with Nathaniel Bumppo a lawless squatter, and professed deer-killer, in order to preserve the game of the county! But, 'Duke, when I fish I fish; so, away, boys, for another haul, and we'll send out wagons and carts in the morning to bring in our prizes."

Marmaduke appeared to understand that all opposition to the will of the sheriff would be useless, and he strolled from the fire to the place where the canoe of the hunters lay, whither the ladies and Oliver Edwards had already preceded him.

Curiosity induced the females to approach this spot; but it was a different motive that led the youth thither. Elizabeth examined the light ashen timbers and thin bark covering of the canoe, in admiration of its neat but simple execution, and with wonder that any human being could be so daring as to trust his life in so frail a vessel. But the youth explained to her the buoyant properties of the boat, and its perfect safety when under proper management; adding, in such glowing terms, a description of the manner in which the fish were struck with the spear, that she changed suddenly, from an apprehension of the danger of the excursion, to a desire to participate in its pleasures. She even ventured a proposition to that effect to her father, laughing at the same time at her own wish, and accusing herself of acting under a woman's caprice.

"Say not so, Bess," returned the Judge; "I would have you above the idle fears of a silly girl. These canoes are the safest kind of boats to those who have skill and steady nerves. I have crossed the broadest part of the Oneida in one much smaller than this."

"And I the Ontary," interrupted the Leather-Stocking; "and that with squaws in the canoe, too. But the Delaware women are used to the paddle, and are good hands in a boat of this natur'. If the young lady would like to see an old man strike a trout for his breakfast, she is welcome to a seat. John will say the same, seeing that he built the canoe, which was only launched yesterday; for I'm not over-curious at such small work as brooms, and basket-making, and other like Indian trades."

Natty gave Elizabeth one of his significant laughs, with a kind nod of the head, when he concluded his invitation but Mohegan, with the native grace of an Indian, approached, and taking her soft white hand into his own swarthy and wrinkled palm, said:

"Come, granddaughter of Miquon, and John will be glad. Trust the Indian; his head is old, though his hand is not steady. The Young Eagle will go, and see that no harm hurts his sister."

"Mr. Edwards," said Elizabeth, blushing slightly, "your friend Mohegan has given a promise for you. Do you redeem the pledge?"

"With my life, if necessary, Miss Temple," cried the youth, with fervor. "The sight is worth some little apprehension; for of real danger there is none, I will go with you and Miss Grand, however, to save appearances."

"With me!" exclaimed Louisa. "No, not with me, Mr. Edwards; nor, surely, do you mean to trust yourself in that slight canoe."

"But I shall; for I have no apprehensions any longer," said Elizabeth, stepping into the boat, and taking a seat where the Indian directed. "Mr. Edwards, you may remain, as three do seem to be enough for such an egg shell."

"It shall hold a fourth," cried the young man, springing to her side, with a violence that nearly shook the weak fabric of the vessel asunder. "Pardon me, Miss Temple, that I do not permit these venerable Charons to take you to the shades unattended by your genius."

"Is it a good or evil spirit?" asked Elizabeth.

"Good to you."

"And mine," added the maiden, with an air that strangely blended pique with satisfaction. But the motion of the canoe gave rise to new ideas, and fortunately afforded a good excuse to the young man to change the discourse.

It appeared to Elizabeth that they glided over the water by magic, so easy and graceful was the manner in which Mohegan guided his little bark. A slight gesture with his spear indicated the way in which Leather-Stocking wished to go, and a profound silence was preserved by the whole party, as the precaution necessary to the success of their fishery. At that point of the lake the water shoaled regularly, differing in this particular altogether from those parts where the mountains rose nearly in perpendicular precipices from the beach. There the largest vessels could have lain, with their yards interlocked with the pines; while here a scanty growth of rushes lifted their tops above the lake, gently curling the waters, as their bending heads waved with the passing breath of the night air. It was at the shallow points only that the bass could be found, or the net cast with success.

Elizabeth saw thousands of these fish swimming in shoals along the shallow and warm waters of the shore; for the flaring light of their torch laid bare the mysteries of the lake, as plainly as if the limpid sheet of the Otsego was but another atmosphere. Every instant she expected to see the impending spear of Leather-Stocking darting into the thronging hosts that were rushing beneath her, where it would seem that a blow could not go amiss; and where, as her father had already said, the prize that would be obtained was worthy any epicure. But Natty had his peculiar habits, and, it would seem, his peculiar tastes also.

His tall stature, and his erect posture, enabled him to see much farther than those who were seated in the bottom of the canoe; and he turned his head warily in every direction, frequently bending his body forward, and straining his vision, as if desirous of penetrating the water that surrounded their boundary of light. At length his anxious scrutiny was rewarded with success, and, waving his spear from the shore, he said in a cautious tone:

"Send her outside the bass, John; I see a laker there, that has run out of the school. It's seldom one finds such a creatur' in shallow water, where a spear can touch it."

Mohegan gave a wave of assent with his hand, and in the next instant the canoe was without the "run of the bass," and in water nearly twenty feet in depth. A few additional knots were laid on the grating, and the light penetrated to the bottom, Elizabeth then saw a fish of unusual size floating above small pieces of logs and sticks. The animal was only distinguishable, at that distance, by a slight but almost imperceptible motion of its fins and tail. The curiosity excited by this unusual exposure of the secrets of the lake seemed to be mutual between the heiress of the land and the lord of these waters, for the "salmon-trout" soon announced his interest by raising his head and body for a few degrees above a horizontal line, and then dropping them again into a horizontal position.

"Whist! whist!" said Natty, in a low voice, on hearing a slight sound made by Elizabeth in bending over the side of the canoe in curiosity; "'tis a skeary animal, and it's a far stroke for a spear. My handle is hut fourteen foot, and the creator' lies a good eighteen from the top of the water: but I'll try him, for he's a ten—pounder."

While speaking, the Leather-Stocking was poising and directing his weapon. Elizabeth saw the bright, polished tines, as they slowly and silently entered the water, where the refraction pointed them many degrees from the true direction of the fish; and she thought that the intended victim saw them also, as he seemed to increase the play of his tail and fins, though without moving his station. At the next instant the tall body of Natty bent to the water's edge, and the handle of his spear disappeared in the lake. The long, dark streak of the gliding weapon, and the little bubbling vortex which followed its rapid flight, were easily to be seen: but it was not until the handle snot again into the air by its own reaction, and its master catching it in his hand, threw its tines uppermost, that Elizabeth was acquainted with the success of the blow. A fish of great size was transfixed by the barbed steel, and was very soon shaken from its impaled situation into the bottom of the canoe.

"That will do, John," said Natty, raising his prize by one of his fingers, and exhibiting it before the torch; "I shall not strike another blow to-night."

The Indian again waved his hand, and replied with the simple and energetic monosyllable of:

"Good."

Elizabeth was awakened from the trance created by this scene, and by gazing in that unusual manner at the bottom of the lake, be the hoarse sounds of Benjamin's voice, and the dashing of oars, as the heavier boat of the seine-drawers approached the spot where the canoe lay, dragging after it the folds of the net.

"Haul off, haul off, Master Bumpo," cried Benjamin, "your top-light frightens the fish, who see the net and sheer off soundings. A fish knows as much as a horse, or, for that matter, more, seeing that it's brought up on the water. Haul oil, Master Bumpo, haul off, I say, and give a wide berth to the seine."

Mohegan guided their little canoe to a point where the movements of the fishermen could be observed, without interruption to the business, and then suffered it to lie quietly on the water, looking like an imaginary vessel floating in air. There appeared to be much ill-humor among the party in the batteau, for the directions of Benjamin were not only frequent, but issued in a voice that partook largely of dissatisfaction.

"Pull larboard oar, will ye, Master Kirby?" cried the old seaman; "pull larboard best. It would puzzle the oldest admiral in their British fleet to cast this here net fair, with a wake like a corkscrew. Full starboard, boy, pull starboard oar, with a will."

"Harkee, Mister Pump," said Kirby, ceasing to row, and speaking with sonic spirit; "I'm a man that likes civil language and decent treatment, such as is right 'twixt man and man. If you want us to go hoy, say so, and hoy I'll go, for the benefit of the company; but I'm not used to being ordered about like dumb cattle."

"Who's dumb cattle?" echoed Benjamin, fiercely, turning his forbidding face to the glare of light from the canoe, and exhibiting every feature teeming with the expression of disgust. "If you want to come aft and con the boat round, come and be damned, and pretty steerage you'll make of it. There's but another heave of the net in the stern-sheets, and we're clear of the thing. Give way, will ye? and shoot her ahead for a fathom or two, and if you catch me afloat again with such a horse-marine as yourself, why, rate me a ship's jackass, that's all."

Probably encouraged by the prospect of a speedy termination to his labor, the wood-chopper resumed his oar, and, under strong excitement, gave a stroke that not only cleared the boat of the net but of the steward at the same instant. Benjamin had stood on the little platform that held the seine, in the stern of the boat, and the violent whirl occasioned by the vigor of the wood-chopper's arm completely destroyed his balance. The position of the lights rendered objects in the batteau distinguishable, both from the canoe and the shore; and the heavy fall on the water drew all eyes to the steward, as he lay struggling, for a moment, in sight.

A loud burst of merriment, to which the lungs of Kirby contributed no small part, broke out like a chorus of laughter, and ran along the eastern mountain, in echoes, until it died away in distant, mocking mirth, among the rocks and woods. The body of the steward was seen slowly to disappear, as was expected; but when the light waves, which had been raised by his fall, began to sink in calmness, and the water finally closed over his head, unbroken and still, a very different feeling pervaded the spectators.

"How fare you, Benjamin?" shouted Richard from the shore.

"The dumb devil can't swim a stroke!" exclaimed Kirby, rising, and beginning to throw aside his clothes.

"Paddle up, Mohegan," cried young Edwards, "the light will show us where he lies, and I will dive for the body."

"Oh! save him! for God's sake, save him!" exclaimed Elizabeth, bowing her head on the side of the canoe in horror.

A powerful and dexterous sweep of Mohegan's paddle sent the canoe directly over the spot where the steward had fallen, and a loud shout from the Leather-Stocking announced that he saw the body.

"Steady the boat while I dive," again cried Edwards.

"Gently, lad, gently," said Natty; "I'll spear the creatur' up in half the time, and no risk to anybody."

The form of Benjamin was lying about half-way to the bottom, grasping with both hands some broken rushes. The blood of Elizabeth curdled to her heart, as she saw the figure of a fellow-creature thus extended under an immense sheet of water, apparently in motion by the undulations of the dying waves, with its face and hands, viewed by that light, and through the medium of the fluid, already colored with hues like death.

At the same instant, she saw the shining tines of Natty's spear approaching the head of the sufferer, and entwining themselves, rapidly and dexterously, in the hairs of his cue and the cape of his coat. The body was now raised slowly, looking ghastly and grim as its features turned upward to the light and approached the surface. The arrival of the nostrils of Benjamin into their own atmosphere was announced by a breathing that would have done credit to a porpoise. For a moment, Natty held the steward suspended, with his head just above the water, while his eyes slowly opened and stared about him, as if he thought that he had reached a new and unexplored country.

As all the parties acted and spoke together, much less time was consumed in the occurrence of these events than in their narration. To bring the batteau to the end of the spear, and to raise the form of Benjamin into the boat, and for the whole party to regain the shore, required but a minute. Kirby, aided by Richard, whose anxiety induced him to run into the water to meet his favorite assistant, carried the motionless steward up the bank, and seated him before the fire, while the sheriff proceeded to order the most approved measures then in use for the resuscitation of the drowned.

"Run, Billy," he cried, "to the village, and bring up the rum-hogshead that lies before the door, in which I am making vinegar, and be quick, boy, don't stay to empty the vinegar, and stop at Mr. Le Quoi's, and buy a paper of tobacco and half a dozen pipes; and ask Remarkable for some salt, and one of her flannel petticoats; and ask Dr. Todd to send his lancet, and to come himself; and—ha! 'Duke, what are you about? would you strangle a man who is full of water, by giving him rum? Help me to open his hand, that I may pat it."

All this time Benjamin sat, with his muscles fixed, his mouth shut, and his hands clinching the rushes which he had seized in the confusion of the moment and which, as he held fast, like a true seaman, had been the means of preventing his body from rising again to the surface. His eyes, however, were open, and stared wildly on the group about the fire, while his lungs were playing like a blacksmith's bellows, as if to compensate themselves for the minute of inaction to which they had been subjected. As he kept his lips compressed, with a most inveterate determination, the air was compelled to pass through his nostrils, and he rather snorted than breathed, and in such a manner that nothing but the excessive agitation of the sheriff could at all justify his precipitous orders.

The bottle, applied to the steward's lips by Marmaduke, acted like a charm. His mouth opened instinctively; his hands dropped the rushes, and seized the glass; his eyes raised from their horizontal stare to the heavens; and the whole man was lost, for a moment, in a new sensation. Unhappily for the propensity of the steward, breath was as necessary after one of these draughts as after his submersion, and the time at length arrived when he was compelled to let go the bottle.

"Why, Benjamin!" roared the sheriff; "you amaze me! for a man of your experience in drownings to act so foolishly! Just now, you were half full of water, and now you are—"

"Full of grog," interrupted the steward, his features settling down, with amazing flexibility, into their natural economy. "But, d'yessie, squire, I kept my hatches chose, and it's but little water that ever gets into my scuttle-butt. Harkee, Master Kirby! I've followed the salt-water for the better part of a man's life, and have seen some navigation on the fresh; but this here matter I will say in your favor, and that is, that you're the awk'ardest green 'un that ever straddled a boat's thwart. Them that likes you for a shipmate, may sail with you



and no thanks; but dam'me if I even walk on the lake shore in your company. For why? you'd as lief drown a man as one of them there fish; not to throw a Christian creature so much as a rope's end when he was adrift, and no life-buoy in sight! Natty Bumppo, give us your fist. There's them that says you're an Indian, and a scalper, but you've served me a good turn, and you may set me down for a friend; thof it would have been more ship shape like to lower the bight of a rope or running bowline below me, than to seize an old seaman by his head-lanyard; but I suppose you are used to taking men by the hair, and seeing you did me good instead of harm thereby, why, it's the same thing, d'ye see?"

Marmaduke prevented any reply, and assuming the action of matters with a dignity and discretion that at once silenced all opposition from his cousin, Benjamin was dispatched to the village by land, and the net was hauled to shore in such a manner that the fish for once escaped its meshes with impunity.

The division of the spoils was made in the ordinary manner, by placing one of the party with his back to the game, who named the owner of each pile. Bill Kirby stretched his large frame on the grass by the side of the fire, as sentinel until morning, over net and fish; and the remainder of the party embarked in the batteau, to return to the village.

The wood-chopper was seen broiling his supper on the coals as they lost sight of the fire, and when the boat approached the shore, the torch of Mohegan's canoe was shining again under the gloom of the eastern mountain. Its motion ceased suddenly; a scattering of brands was in the air, and then all remained dark as the conjunction of night, forest, and mountain could render the scene.

The thoughts of Elizabeth wandered from the youth, who was holding a canopy of shawls over herself and Louisa, to the hunter and the Indian warrior; and she felt an awakening curiosity to visit a hut where men of such different habits and temperament were drawn together as by common impulse.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"Cease all this parlanche about hills and dales.  
None listen to thy scenes of boyish frolic.  
Fond dotard! with such tickled ears as thou dost  
Come to thy tale."  
—Duo.

Mr. Jones arose on the following morning with the sun, and, ordering his own and Marmaduke's steeds to be saddled, he proceeded, with a countenance big with some business of unusual moment to the apartment of the Judge. The door was unfastened, and Richard entered, with the freedom that characterized not only the intercourse between the cousins, but the ordinary manners of the sheriff.

"Well, 'Duke, to horse," he cried, "and I will explain to you my meaning in the allusions I made last night. David says, in the Psalms—no, it was Solomon, but it was all in the family—Solomon said there was a time for all things; and, in my humble opinion, a fishing-party is not the moment for discussing important subjects. Ha! why, what the devil ails you, Marmaduke? Ain't you well? Let me feel your pulse; my grandfather, you know—"

"Quite well in the body, Richard," interrupted the Judge, repulsing his cousin, who was about to assume the functions that rightly belonged to Dr. Todd; "but ill at heart. I received letters by the post last night, after we returned from the point, and this among the number."

The sheriff took the letter, but without turning his eyes on the writing, for he was examining the appearance of the other with astonishment. From the face of his cousin the gaze of Richard wandered to the table, which was covered with letters, packets, and newspapers; then to the apartment and all it contained. On the bed there was the impression that had been made by a human form, but the coverings were unmoved, and everything indicated that the occupant of the room had passed a sleepless night. The candles had burned to the sockets, and had evidently extinguished themselves in their own fragments Marmaduke had drawn his curtains, and opened both the shutters and the sashes, to admit the balmy air "of a spring morning; but his pale cheek, his quivering lip, and his sunken eye presented altogether so very different an appearance from the usual calm, manly, and cheerful aspect of the Judge, that the sheriff grew each moment more and more bewildered with astonishment. At length Richard found time to cast his eyes on the direction of the letter, which he still held unopened, crumpling it in his hand.

"What! a ship-letter!" he exclaimed; "and from England, ha! 'Duke, there must be news of importance! indeed!"

"Read it," said Marmaduke, pacing the floor in excessive agitation.

Richard, who commonly thought aloud, was unable to read a letter without suffering part of its contents to escape him in audible sounds. So much of the epistle as was divulged in that manner, we shall lay before the reader, accompanied by the passing remarks of the sheriff:

"London, February 12, 1793.' What a devil of a passage she had! but the wind has been northwest for six weeks, until within the last fortnight. Sir, your favors of August 10th, September 23d, and of December 1st, were received in due season, and the first answered by return of packet. Since the receipt of the last, I' "—here a long passage was rendered indistinct by a kind of humming noise by the sheriff—"I grieve to say that '—hum, hum, bad enough to be sure—' but trusts that a merciful Providence has seen fit'—hum, hum, hum seems to be a good, pious sort of a man, 'Duke; belongs to the Established Church, I dare say; hum, hum—' vessel sailed from Falmouth on or about the 1st September of last year, and'—hum, hum, hum, 'If anything should transpire on this afflicting subject shall not fail'—hum, hum; really a good-hearted man, for a lawyer—'but Can communicate nothing further at present'—hum, hum. 'The national convention'—hum, hum—'unfortunate Louis'—hum, hum—'example of your Washington'—a very sensible man, I declare, and none of your crazy democrats. Hum, hum—'our gallant navy'—hum, hum—'under our most excellent monarch'—ay, a good man enough, that King George, but bad advisers: hum, hum—I beg to conclude with assurances of my perfect respect.'—hum, hum—'Andrew Holt. '—Andrew Holt, a very sensible, feeling man, this Mr. Andrew Holt—but the writer of evil tidings. What will you do next, Cousin Marmaduke?"

"What can I do, Richard, but trust to time, and the will of Heaven? Here is another letter from Connecticut, but it only repeats the substance of the last. There is but one consoling reflection to be gathered from the English news, which is, that my last letter was received by him before the ship sailed."

"This is bad enough, indeed! 'Duke, bad enough, indeed! and away go all my plans, of putting wings to the house, to the devil. I had made arrangements for a ride to introduce you to something of a very important nature. You know how much you think of mines—"

"Talk not of mines," interrupted the Judge: "there is a sacred duty to be performed, and that without delay, I must devote this day to writing; and thou must be my assistant, Richard; it will not do to employ Oliver in a matter of such secrecy and interest."

"No, no, 'Duke," cried the sheriff, squeezing his hand, "I am your man, just now; we are sister's children, and blood, after all, is the best cement to make friendship stick together. Well, well, there is no hurry about the silver mine, just now; another time will do as well. We shall want Dirky Van, I suppose?"

Marmaduke assented to this indirect question, and the sheriff relinquished all his intentions on the subject of the ride, and, repairing to the breakfast parlor, he dispatched a messenger to require the immediate presence of Dirck Van der School.

The village of Templeton at that time supported but two lawyers, one of whom was introduced to our readers in the bar-room of the "Bold Dragoon." and the other was the gentleman of whom Richard spoke by the friendly yet familiar appellation of Dirck, or Dirky Van. Great good-nature, a very tolerable share of skill in his profession, and, considering the circumstances, no contemptible degree of honesty, were the principal ingredients in the character of this man, who was known to the settlers as Squire Van der School, and

sometimes by the flattering though anomalous title of the “Dutch” or “honest lawyer.”

We would not wish to mislead our readers in their conceptions of any of our characters, and we therefore feel it necessary to add that the adjective, in the preceding agnomen of Mr. Van der School, was used in direct reference to its substantive. Our orthodox friends need not be told that all the merit in this world is comparative; and, once for all, we desire to say that, where anything which involves qualities or characters is asserted, we must be understood to mean, “under the circumstances.”

During the remainder of the day, the Judge was closeted with his cousin and his lawyer; and no one else was admitted to his apartment, excepting his daughter. The deep distress that so evidently affected Marmaduke was in some measure communicated to Elizabeth also; for a look of dejection shaded her intelligent features, and the buoyancy of her animated spirits was sensibly softened. Once on that day, young Edwards, who was a wondering and observant spectator of the sudden alteration produced in the heads of the family, detected a tear stealing over the cheek of Elizabeth, and suffusing her bright eyes with a softness that did not always belong to their expression.

“Have any evil tidings been received, Miss Temple?” he inquired, with an interest and voice that caused Louisa Grant to raise her head from her needlework, with a quick ness at which she instantly blushed herself. “I would offer my services to your father, if, as I suspect, he needs an agent in some distant place, and I thought it would give you relief.”

“We have certainly heard bad news,” returned Elizabeth, “and it may be necessary that my father should leave home for a short period; unless I can persuade him to trust my cousin Richard with the business, whose absence from the country, just at this time, too, might be inexpedient.”

The youth paused a moment, and the blood gathered slowly to his temples as he continued:

“If it be of a nature that I could execute—”

“It is such as can only be confided to one we know—one of ourselves.”

“Surely, you know me, Miss Temple!” he added, with a warmth that he seldom exhibited, but which did some times escape him in the moments of their frank communications. “Have I lived five months under your roof to be a stranger?”

Elizabeth was engaged with her needle also, and she bent her head to one side, affecting to arrange her muslin; but her hand shook, her color heightened, and her eyes lost their moisture in an expression of ungovernable interest, as she said:

“How much do we know of you, Mr. Edwards?”

“How much!” echoed the youth, gazing from the speaker to the mild countenance of Louisa, that was also illuminated with curiosity; “how much Have I been so long an inmate with you and not known?”

The head of Elizabeth turned slowly from its affected position, and the look of confusion that had blended so strongly with an expression of interest changed to a smile.

“We know you, sir, indeed; you are called Mr. Oliver Edwards. I understand that you have informed my friend Miss Grant that you are a native—”

“Elizabeth!” exclaimed Louisa, blushing to the eyes, and trembling like an aspen; “you misunderstood me, dear Miss Temple; I—I—it was only a conjecture. Besides, if Mr. Edwards is related to the natives why should we reproach him? In what are we better? at least I, who am the child of a poor and unsettled clergyman?”

Elizabeth shook her head doubtingly, and even laughed, but made no reply, until, observing the melancholy which pervaded the countenance of her companion, who was thinking of the poverty and labors of her father, she continued:

“Nay, Louisa, humility carries you too far. The daughter of a minister of the church can have no superiors. Neither I nor Mr. Edwards is quite your equal, unless,” she added, again smiling, “he is in secret a king.”

“A faithful servant of the King of kings, Miss Temple, is inferior to none on earth,” said Louisa; “but his honors are his own; I am only the child of a poor and friendless man, and can claim no other distinction. Why, then, should I feel myself elevated above Mr. Edwards, because—because—perhaps he is only very, very distantly related to John Mohegan?”

Glances of a very comprehensive meaning were exchanged between the heiress and the young man, as Louisa betrayed, while vindicating his lineage, the reluctance with which she admitted his alliance with the old warrior; but not even a smile at the simplicity of their companion was indulged in by either.

“On reflection, I must acknowledge that my situation here is somewhat equivocal,” said Edwards, “though I may be said to have purchased it with my blood.”

“The blood, too, of one of the native lords of the soil!” cried Elizabeth, who evidently put little faith in his aboriginal descent.

“Do I bear the marks of my lineage so very plainly impressed on my appearance? I am dark, but not very red—not more so than common?”

“Rather more so, just now.”

“I am sure, Miss Temple,” cried Louisa, “you cannot have taken much notice of Mr. Edwards. His eyes are not so black as Mohegan’s or even your own, nor is his hair.”

“Very possibly, then, I can lay claim to the same descent. It would be a great relief to my mind to think so, for I own that I grieve when I see old Mohegan walking about these lands like the ghost of one of their ancient possessors, and feel how small is my own right to possess them.”

“Do you?” cried the youth, with a vehemence that startled the ladies

“I do, indeed,” returned Elizabeth, after suffering a moment to pass in surprise; “but what can I do—what can my father do? Should we offer the old man a home and a maintenance, his habits would compel him to refuse us. Neither were we so silly as to wish such a

thing, could we convert these clearings and farms again into hunting grounds, as the Leather-Stocking would wish to see them."

"You speak the truth, Miss Temple," said Edwards. "What can you do indeed? But there is one thing that I am certain you can and will do, when you become the mistress of these beautiful valleys—use your wealth with indulgence to the poor, and charity to the needy; indeed, you can do no more."

"And That will be doing a good deal," said Louisa, smiling in her turn. "But there will, doubtless, be one to take the direction of such things from her hands."

"I am not about to disclaim matrimony, like a silly girl, who dreams of nothing else from morn till night; but I am a nun here, without the vow of celibacy. Where shall I find a husband in these forests?"

"There is none, Miss Temple," said Edwards quickly; "there is none who has a right to aspire to you, and I know that you will wait to be sought by your equal; or die, as you live, loved, respected, and admired by all who know you."

The young man seemed to think that he had said all that was required by gallantry, for he arose, and, taking his hat, hurried from the apartment. Perhaps Louisa thought that he had said more than was necessary, for she sighed, with an aspiration so low that it was scarcely audible to herself, and bent her head over her work again. And it is possible that Miss Temple wished to hear more, for her eyes continued fixed for a minute on the door through which the young man had passed, then glanced quickly toward her companion, when the long silence that succeeded manifested how much zest may be given to the conversation of two maidens under eighteen, by the presence of a youth of three-and-twenty.

The first person encountered by Mr. Edwards, as he rather rushed than walked from the house, was the little square-built lawyer, with a large bundle of papers under his arm, a pair of green spectacles on his nose, with glasses at the sides, as if to multiply his power of detecting frauds by additional organs of vision.

Mr. Van der School was a well-educated man, but of slow comprehension, who had imbibed a wariness in his speeches and actions, from having suffered by his collisions with his more mercurial and apt brethren who had laid the foundations of their practice in the Eastern courts, and who had sucked in shrewdness with their mother's milk. The caution of this gentleman was exhibited in his actions, by the utmost method and punctuality, tinctured with a good deal of timidity; and in his speeches, by a parenthetical style, that frequently left to his auditors a long search after his meaning.

"A good-morning to you, Mr. Van der School," said Edwards; "it seems to be a busy day with us at the mansion-house."

"Good-morning, Mr. Edwards (if that is your name [for, being a stranger, we have no other evidence of the fact than your own testimony], as I understand you have given it to Judge Temple), good-morning, sir. It is, apparently a busy day (but a man of your discretion need not be told [having, doubtless, discovered it of your own accord], that appearances are often deceitful) up at the mansion-house."

"Have you papers of consequence that will require copying? Can I be of assistance in any way?"

"There are papers (as doubtless you see [for your eyes are young] by the outsides) that require copying."

"Well, then, I will accompany you to your office, and receive such as are most needed, and by night I shall have them done if there be much haste."

"I shall always be glad to see you, sir, at my office (as in duty bound, not that it is obligatory to receive any man within your dwelling unless so inclined), which is a castle, according to the forms of politeness, or at any other place; but the papers are most strictly confidential (and, as such, cannot be read by any one), unless so directed (by Judge Temple's solemn injunctions), and are invisible to all eyes; excepting those whose duties (I mean assumed duties) require it of them."

"Well, sir, as I perceive that I can be of no service, I wish you another good-morning; but beg you will remember that I am quite idle just now, and I wish you would intimate as much to Judge Temple, and make him a tender of my services in any part of the world, \ unless—unless—it be far from Templeton."

"I will make the communication, sir, in your name (with your own qualifications), as your agent. Good morning, sir. But stay proceedings, Mr. Edwards (so called), for a moment. Do you wish me to state the offer of travelling as a final contract (for which consideration has been received at former dates [by sums advanced], which would be binding), or as a tender of services for which compensation is to be paid (according to future agreement between the parties), on performance of the conditions?"

"Any way, any way," said Edwards; "he seems in distress, and I would assist him."

"The motive is good, sir (according to appearances which are often deceitful) on first impressions), and does you honor. I will mention your wish, young gentleman (as you now seem), and will not fail to communicate the answer by five o'clock P.M. of this present day (God willing), if you give me an opportunity so to do."

The ambiguous nature of the situation and character of Mr. Edwards had rendered him an object of peculiar suspicion to the lawyer, and the youth was consequently too much accustomed to similar equivocal and guarded speeches to feel any unusual disgust at the present dialogue. He saw at once that it was the intention of the practitioner to conceal the nature of his business, even from the private secretary of Judge Temple; and he knew too well the difficulty of comprehending the meaning of Mr. Van der School, when the gentleman most wished to be luminous in his discourse, not to abandon all thoughts of a discovery, when he perceived that the attorney was endeavoring to avoid anything like an approach to a cross-examination. They parted at the gate, the lawyer walking with an important and hurried air toward his office, keeping his right hand firmly clinched on the bundle of papers.

It must have been obvious to all our readers, that the youth entertained an unusual and deeply seated prejudice against the character of the Judge; but owing to some counteracting cause, his sensations were now those of powerful interest in the state of his patron's present feelings, and in the cause of his secret uneasiness. He remained gazing after the lawyer until the door closed on both the bearer and the mysterious packet, when he returned slowly to the dwelling, and endeavored to forget his curiosity in the usual avocations of his office.

When the Judge made his reappearance in the circles of his family, his cheerfulness was tempered by a shade of melancholy that lingered for many days around his manly brow; but the magical progression of the season aroused him from his temporary apathy, and his smiles returned with the summer.

The heats of the days, and the frequent occurrence of balmy showers, had completed in an incredibly short period the growth of plants which the lingering spring had so long retarded in the germ; and the woods presented every shade of green that the American forests know. The stumps in the cleared fields were already hidden beneath the wheat that was waving with every breath of the summer air, shining and changing its hues like velvet.

During the continuance of his cousin's dejection, Mr. Jones forebore, with much consideration, to press on his attention a business that each hour was drawing nearer to the heart of the sheriff, and which, if any opinion could be formed by his frequent private conferences with the man who was introduced in these pages by the name of Jotham, at the bar-room of the Bold Dragoon, was becoming also of great importance.

At length the sheriff ventured to allude again to the subject; and one evening, in the beginning of July, Marmaduke made him a promise of devoting the following day to the desired excursion.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"Speak on, my dearest father!  
Thy words are like the breezes of the west."  
—Milman.

It was a mild and soft morning, when Marmaduke and Richard mounted their horses and proceeded on the expedition that had so long been uppermost in the thoughts of the latter; and Elizabeth and Louisa appeared at the same instant in the hall, attired for an excursion on foot.

The head of Miss Grant was covered by a neat little hat of green silk, and her modest eyes peered from under its shade, with the soft languor that characterized her whole appearance; but Miss Temple trod her father's wide apartments with the step of their mistress, holding in her hands, dangling by one of its ribbons, the gypsy that was to conceal the glossy locks that curled around her polished fore head in rich profusion.

"What? are you for a walk, Bess?" cried the Judge, suspending his movements for a moment to smile, with a father's fondness, at the display of womanly grace and beauty that his child presented. "Remember the heats of July, my daughter; nor venture further than thou canst retrace before the meridian. Where is thy parasol, girl? thou wilt lose tine polish of that brow, under this sun and southern breeze, unless thou guard it with unusual care."

"I shall then do more honor to my connections," returned the smiling daughter. "Cousin Richard has a bloom that any lady might envy. At present the resemblance between us is so trifling that no stranger would know us to be 'sisters' children."

"Grandchildren, you mean, Cousin Bess," said the sheriff. "But on, Judge Temple; time and tide wait for no man; and if you take my counsel, sir, in twelve months from this day you may make an umbrella for your daughter of her camel's-hair shawl, and have its frame of solid silver. I ask nothing for myself, 'Duke; you have been a good friend to me already; besides, all that I have will go to Bess there, one of these melancholy days, so it's as long as it's short, whether I or you leave it. But we have a day's ride before us, sir; so move forward, or dismount, and say you won't go at once."

"Patience, patience, Dickon," returned the Judge, checking his horse and turning again to his daughter. "If thou art for the mountains, love, stray not too deep into the forest. I entreat thee; for, though it is done often with impunity, there is sometimes danger."

"Not at this season, I believe, sir," said Elizabeth; "for, I will confess, it is the intention of Louisa and myself to stroll among the hills."

"Less at this season than in the winter, dear; but still there may be danger in venturing too far. But though thou art resolute, Elizabeth, thou art too much like thy mother not to be prudent."

The eyes of the parent turned reluctantly from his child, and the Judge and sheriff rode slowly through the gateway, and disappeared among the buildings of the village.

During this short dialogue, young Edwards stood, an attentive listener, holding in his hand a fishing-rod, the day and the season having tempted him also to desert the house for the pleasure of exercise in the air. As the equestrians turned through the gate, he approached the young females, who were already moving toward the street, and was about to address them, as Louisa paused, and said quickly:

"Mr. Edwards would speak to us, Elizabeth."

The other stopped also, and turned to the youth, politely but with a slight coldness in her air, that sensibly checked the freedom with which he had approached them,

"Your father is not pleased that you should walk unattended in the hills, Miss Temple. If I might offer my self as a protector—"

"Does my father select Mr. Oliver Edwards as the organ of his displeasure?" interrupted the lady.

"Good Heaven! you misunderstood my meaning; I should have said uneasy or not pleased. I am his servant, madam, and in consequence yours. I repeat that, with your consent, I will change my rod for a fowling-piece, and keep nigh you on the mountain."

"I thank you, Mr. Edwards; but where there is no danger, no protection is required. We are not yet reduced to wandering among these free hills accompanied by a body guard. If such a one is necessary there he is, however.—Here, Brave—Brave—my noble Brave!" The huge mastif that has been already mentioned, appeared from his kennel, gaping and stretching himself with pampered laziness; but as his mistress again called:

"Come, dear Brave; once you have served your master well; let us see how you can do your duty by his daughter"—the dog wagged his tail, as if he understood her language, walked with a stately gait to her side, where he seated himself, and looked up at her face, with an intelligence but little inferior to that which beamed in her own lovely countenance.

She resumed her walk, but again paused, after a few steps, and added, in tones of conciliation:

"You can be serving us equally, and, I presume, more agreeably to yourself, Mr. Edwards, by bringing us a string of your favorite perch for the dinner-table."

When they again began to walk Miss Temple did not look back to see how the youth bore this repulse; but the head of Louisa was turned several times before they reached the gate on that considerate errand.

"I am afraid, Elizabeth," she said, "that we have mortified Oliver. He is still standing where we left him, leaning on his rod. Perhaps he thinks us proud."

"He thinks justly," exclaimed Miss Temple, as if awaking from a deep musing; "he thinks justly, then. We are too proud to admit of such particular attentions from a young man in an equivocal situation. What! make him the companion of our most private walks! It is pride, Louisa, but it is the pride of a woman."

It was several minutes before Oliver aroused himself from the abstracted position in which he was standing when Louisa last saw him; but when he did, he muttered something rapidly and incoherently, and, throwing his rod over his shoulder, he strode down the walk through the gate and along one of the streets of the village, until he reached the lake-shore, with the air of an emperor. At this spot boats were kept for the use of Judge Temple and his family. The young man threw himself into a light skiff, and, seizing the oars, he sent it across the lake toward the hut of Leather-Stocking, with a pair of vigorous arms. By the time he had rowed a quarter of a mile, his reflections were less bitter; and when he saw the bushes that lined the shore in front of Natty's habitation gliding by him, as if they possessed the motion which proceeded from his own efforts, he was quite cooled in mind, though somewhat heated in body. It is quite possible that the very same reason which guided the conduct of Miss Temple suggested itself to a man of the breeding and education of the youth; and it is very certain that, if such were the case, Elizabeth rose instead of falling in the estimation of Mr. Edwards.

The oars were now raised from the water, and the boat shot close in to the land, where it lay gently agitated by waves of its own creating, while the young man, first casting a cautious and searching glance around him in every direction, put a small whistle to his mouth, and blew a long, shrill note that rang among the echoing rocks behind the hut. At this alarm, the hounds of Natty rushed out of their bark kennel, and commenced their long, piteous howls, leaping about as if half frantic, though restrained by the leashes of buckskin by which they were fastened.

"Quiet, Hector, quiet," said Oliver, again applying his whistle to his mouth, and drawing out notes still more shrill than before. No reply was made, the dogs having returned to their kennel at the sound of his voice.

Edwards pulled the bows of the boat on the shore, and landing, ascended the beach and approached the door of the cabin. The fastenings were soon undone, and he entered, closing the door after him, when all was as silent, in that retired spot, as if the foot of man had never trod the wilderness. The sounds of the hammers, that were in incessant motion in the village, were faintly heard across the water; but the dogs had crouched into their lairs, satisfied that none but the privileged had approached the forbidden ground.

A quarter of an hour elapsed before the youth reappeared, when he fastened the door again, and spoke kindly to the hounds. The dogs came out at the well-known tones, and the slut jumped upon his person, whining and barking as if entreating Oliver to release her from prison. But old Hector raised his nose to the light current of air, and opened a long howl, that might have been heard for a mile. "Ha! what do you scent, old veteran of the woods?" cried Edwards. "If a beast, it is a bold one; and if a man, an impudent."

He sprang through the top of a pine that had fallen near the side of the hut, and ascended a small hillock that sheltered the cabin to the south, where he caught a glimpse of the formal figure of Hiram Doolittle, as it vanished, with unusual rapidity for the architect, amid the bushes.

"What can that fellow be wanting here?" muttered Oliver. "He has no business in this quarter, unless it be curiosity, which is an endemic in these woods. But against that I will effectually guard, though the dogs should take a liking to his ugly visage, and let him pass." The youth returned to the door, while giving vent to this soliloquy, and completed the fastenings by placing a small chain through a staple, and securing it there by a padlock. "He is a pettifogger, and surely must know that there is such a thing as feloniously breaking into a man's house."

Apparently well satisfied with this arrangement, the youth again spoke to the hounds; and, descending to the shore, he launched his boat, and taking up his oars, pulled off into the lake.

There were several places in the Otsego that were celebrated fishing-ground for perch. One was nearly opposite to the cabin, and another, still more famous, was near a point, at the distance of a mile and a half above it, under the brow of the mountain, and on the same side of the lake with the hut. Oliver Edwards pulled his little skiff to the first, and sat, for a minute, undecided whether to continue there, with his eyes on the door of the cabin, or to change his ground, with a view to get superior game. While gazing about him, he saw the light-colored bark canoe of his old companions riding on the water, at the point we have mentioned, and containing two figures, that he at once knew to be Mohegan and the Leather-Stocking. This decided the matter, and the youth pulled, in a very few minutes, to the place where his friends were fishing, and fastened his boat to the light vessel of the Indian.

The old men received Oliver with welcoming nods, but neither drew his line from the water nor in the least varied his occupation. When Edwards had secured his own boat, he baited his hook and threw it into the lake, with out speaking.

"Did you stop at the wigwam, lad, as you rowed past?" asked Natty.

"Yes, and I found all safe; but that carpenter and justice of the peace, Mr., or as they call him, Squire, Doolittle, was prowling through the woods. I made sure of the door before I left the hut, and I think he is too great a coward to approach the hounds."

"There's little to be said in favor of that man," said Natty, while he drew in a perch and baited his hook. "He craves dreadfully to come into the cabin, and has as good as asked me as much to my face; but I put him off with unsartain answers, so that he is no wiser than Solo mon. This comes of having so many laws that such a man may be called on to intarpret them."

"I fear he is more knave than fool," cried Edwards; "he makes a tool of, that simple man, the sheriff; and I dread that his impertinent curiosity may yet give us much trouble."

"If he harbors too much about the cabin, lad, I'll shoot the creatur'," said the Leather-Stocking, quite simply.

"No, no, Natty, you must remember the law," said Edwards, "or we shall have you in trouble; and that, old man, would be an evil day and sore tidings to us all."

"Would it, boy?" exclaimed the hunter, raising his eyes, with a look of friendly interest, toward the youth. "You have the true blood in your veins, Mr. Oliver; and I'll support it to the face of Judge Temple or in any court in the country. How is it, John? Do I speak the true word? Is the lad stanch, and of the right blood?"

"He is a Delaware," said Mohegan, "and my brother. The Young Eagle is brave, and he will be a chief. No harm can come."

"Well, well," cried the youth impatiently, "say no more about it, my good friends; if I am not all that your partiality would make me, I am yours through life, in prosperity as in poverty. We will talk of other matters."

The old hunters yielded to his wish, which seemed to be their law. For a short time a profound silence prevailed, during which each man was very busy with his hook and line, but Edwards, probably feeling that it remained with him to renew the discourse, soon observed, with the air of one who knew not what he said:

"How beautifully tranquil and glassy the lake is! Saw you it ever more calm and even than at this moment, Natty?"

"I have known the Otsego water for five-and-forty years," said Leather—Stocking, "and I will say that for it, which is, that a cleaner spring or better fishing is not to be found in the land. Yes, yes; I had the place to myself once, and a cheerful time I had of it. The game was plenty as heart could wish; and there was none to meddle with the ground unless there might have been a hunting party of the Delawares crossing the hills, or, maybe, a rifling scout of them thieves, the Iroquois. There was one or two Frenchmen that squatted in the flats further west, and married squaws; and some of the Scotch-Irishers, from the Cherry Valley, would come on to the lake, and borrow my canoe to take a mess of parch, or drop a line for salmon-trout; but, in the main, it was a cheerful place, and I had but little to disturb me in it. John would come, and John knows." Mohegan turned his dark face at this appeal; and, moving his hand forward with graceful motion of assent, he spoke, using the Delaware language:

"The land was owned by my people; we gave it to my brother in council—to the Fire-eater; and what the Delawares give lasts as long as the waters run. Hawk-eye smoked at that council, for we loved him."

"No, no, John," said Natty, "I was no chief, seeing that I knowed nothing of scholarship, and had a white skin. But it was a comfortable hunting-ground then, lad, and would have been so this day, but for the money of Marmaduke Temple, and the twisty ways of the law."

"It must have been a sight of melancholy pleasure in deed," said Edwards, while his eye roved along the shores and over the hills, where the clearings, groaning with the golden corn, were cheering the forest with the signs of life, "to have roamed over these mountains and along this sheet of beautiful water, without a living soul to speak to, or to thwart your humor."

"Haven't I said it was cheerful?" said Leather-Stocking. "Yes, yes, when the trees began to be covered with leaves, and the ice was out of the lake, it was a second paradise. I have travelled the woods for fifty-three years, and have made them my home for more than forty, and I can say that I have met but one place that was more to my liking; and that was only to eyesight, and not for hunting or fishing."

"And where was that?" asked Edwards.

"Where! why, up on the Catskills. I used often to go up into the mountains after wolves' skins and bears; once they paid me to get them a stuffed painter, and so I often went. There's a place in them hills that I used to climb to when I wanted to see the carryings on of the world, that would well pay any man for a barked shin or a torn moccasin. You know the Catskills, lad; for you must have seen them on your left, as you followed the river up from York, looking as blue as a piece of clear sky, and holding the clouds on their tops, as the smoke curls over the head of an Indian chief at the council fire. Well, there's the High-peak and the Round-top, which lay back like a father and mother among their children, seeing they are far above all the other hills. But the place I mean is next to the river, where one of the ridges juts out a little from the rest, and where the rocks fall, for the best part of a thousand feet, so much up and down, that a man standing on their edges is fool enough to think he can jump from top to bottom."

"What see you when you get there?" asked Edwards,

"Creation," said Natty, dropping the end of his rod into the water, and sweeping one hand around him in a circle, "all creation, lad. I was on that hill when Vaughan burned 'Sopus in the last war; and I saw the vessels come out of the Highlands as plain as I can see that lime-scow rowing into the Susquehanna, though one was twenty times farther from me than the other. The river was in sight for seventy miles, looking like a curled shaving under my feet, though it was eight long miles to its banks. I saw the hills in the Hampshire grants, the highlands of the river, and all that God had done, or man could do, far as eye could reach—you know that the Indians named me for my sight, lad; and from the flat on the top of that mountain, I have often found the place where Albany stands. And as for 'Sopus, the day the royal troops burnt the town, the smoke seemed so nigh, that I thought I could hear the screeches of the women."

"It must have been worth the toil to meet with such a glorious view."

"If being the best part of a mile in the air and having men's farms and houses your feet, with rivers looking like ribbons, and mountains bigger than the 'Vision seeming to be hay-stacks of green grass under you, gives any satisfaction to a man, I can recommend the spot. When I first came into the woods to live, I used to have weak spells when I felt lonesome: and then I would go into the Catskills, and spend a few days on that hill to look at the ways of man; but it's now many a year since I felt any such longings, and I am getting too old for rugged rocks. But there's a place, a short two miles back of that very hill, that in late times I relished better than the mountains: for it was more covered with the trees, and natural."

"And where was that?" inquired Edwards, whose curiosity was strongly excited by the simple description of the hunter.

"Why, there's a fall in the hills where the water of two little ponds, that lie near each other, breaks out of their bounds and runs over the rocks into the valley. The stream is, maybe, such a one as would turn a mill, if so useless thing was wanted in the wilderness. But the hand that made that 'Leap' never made a mill. There the water comes crooking and winding among the rocks, first so slow that a trout could swim in it, and then starting and running like a creatur' that wanted to make a far spring, till it gets to where the mountain divides, like the cleft hoof of a deer, leaving a deep hollow for the brook to tumble into. The first pitch is nigh two hundred feet, and the water looks like flakes of driven snow afore it touches the bottom; and there the stream gathers itself together again for a new start, and maybe flutters over fifty feet of flat rock before it falls for another hundred, when it jumps about from shelf to shelf, first turning this-away and then turning that-away, striving to get out of the hollow, till it finally comes to the plain."



"I have never heard of this spot before; it is not mentioned in the books."

"I never read a book in my life," said Leather-Stocking; "and how should a man who has lived in towns and schools know anything about the wonders of the woods? No, no, lad; there has that little stream of water been playing among the hills since He made the world, and not a dozen white men have ever laid eyes on it. The rock sweeps like mason-work, in a half-round, on both sides of the fall, and shelves over the bottom for fifty feet; so that when I've been sitting at the foot of the first pitch, and my hounds have run into the caverns behind the sheet of water, they've looked no bigger than so many rabbits. To my judgment, lad, it's the best piece of work that I've met with in the woods; and none know how often the hand of God is seen in the wilderness, but them that rove it for a man's life."

"What becomes of the water? In which direction does it run? Is it a tributary of the Delaware?"

"Anan!" said Natty.

"Does the water run into the Delaware?"

"No, no; it's a drop for the old Hudson, and a merry time it has till it gets down off the mountain. I've sat on the shelving rock many a long hour, boy, and watched the bubbles as they shot by me, and thought how long it would be before that very water, which seemed made for the wilderness, would be under the bottom of a vessel, and tossing in the salt sea. It is a spot to make a man solemnize. You go right down into the valley that lies to the east of the High Peak, where, in the fall of the year, thousands of acres of woods are before your eyes, in the deep hollow, and along the side of the mountain, painted like ten thousand rainbows, by no hand of man, though without the ordering of God's providence."

"You are eloquent, Leather-Stocking," exclaimed the youth.

"Anan!" repeated Natty.

"The recollection of the sight has warmed your blood, old man. How many years is it since you saw the place?"

The hunter made no reply; but, bending his ear near the water, he sat holding his breath, and listening attentively as if to some distant sound. At length he raised his head, and said:

"If I hadn't fastened the hounds with my own hands, with a fresh leash of green buckskin, I'd take a Bible oath that I heard old Hector ringing his cry on the mountain."

"It is impossible," said Edwards; "it is not an hour since I saw him in his kennel."

By this time the attention of Mohegan was attracted to the sounds; but, notwithstanding the youth was both silent and attentive, he could hear nothing but the lowing of some cattle from the western hills. He looked at the old men, Natty sitting with his hand to his ear, like a trumpet, and Mohegan bending forward, with an arm raised to a level with his face, holding the forefinger elevated as a signal for attention, and laughed aloud at what he deemed to be imaginary sounds.

"Laugh if you will, boy," said Leather-Stocking, "the hounds be out, and are hunting a deer, No man can deceive me in such a matter. I wouldn't have had the thing happen for a beaver's skin. Not that I care for the law; but the venison is lean now, and the dumb things run the flesh off their own bones for no good. Now do you hear the hounds?"

Edwards started, as a full cry broke on his ear, changing from the distant sounds that were caused by some intervening hill, to confused echoes that rang among the rocks that the dogs were passing, and then directly to a deep and hollow baying that pealed under the forest under the Lake shore. These variations in the tones of the hounds passed with amazing rapidity; and, while his eyes were glancing along the margin of the water, a tearing of the branches of the alder and dogwood caught his attention, at a spot near them and at the next moment a noble buck sprang on the shore, and buried himself in the lake. A full-mouthed cry followed, when Hector and the slut shot through the opening in the bushes, and darted into the lake also, bearing their breasts gallantly against the water.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"Oft in the full descending flood he tries  
To lose the scent, and lave his burning sides."  
—Thomson.

"I knowed it—I knowed it!" cried Natty, when both deer and hounds were in full view; "the buck has gone by them with the wind, and it has been too much for the poor rogues; but I must break them of these tricks, or they'll give me a deal of trouble. He-ere, he-ere—shore with you, rascals—shore with you—will ye? Oh! off with you, old Hector, or I'll hackle your hide with my ramrod when I get ye."

The dogs knew their master's voice, and after swimming in a circle, as if reluctant to give over the chase, and yet afraid to persevere, they finally obeyed, and returned to the land, where they filled the air with their cries.

In the mean time the deer, urged by his fears, had swum over half the distance between the shore and the boats, before his terror permitted him to see the new danger. But at the sounds of Natty's voice, he turned short in his course and for a few moments seemed about to rush back again, and brave the dogs. His retreat in this direction was, however, effectually cut off, and, turning a second time, he urged his course obliquely for the centre of the lake, with an intention of landing on the western shore. As the buck swam by the fishermen, raising his nose high into the air, curling the water before his slim neck like the beak of a galley, the Leather-Stocking began to sit very uneasy in his canoe.

"'Tis a noble creatur'!" he exclaimed; "what a pair of horns! a man might hang up all his garments on the branches. Let me see—July is the last month, and the flesh must be getting good." While he was talking, Natty had instinctively employed himself in fastening the inner end of the bark rope, that served him for a cable, to a paddle, and, rising suddenly on his legs, he cast this buoy away, and cried; "Strike out, John! let her go. The creatur's a fool to tempt a man in this way."

Mohegan threw the fastening of the youth's boat from the canoe, and with one stroke of his paddle sent the light bark over the water like a meteor.

"Hold!" exclaimed Edwards. "Remember the law, my old friends. You are in plain sight of the village, and I know that Judge Temple is determined to prosecute all, indiscriminately, who kill deer out of season."

The remonstrance came too late; the canoe was already far from the skiff, and the two hunters were too much engaged in the pursuit to listen to his voice.

The buck was now within fifty yards of his pursuers, cutting the water gallantly, and snorting at each breath with terror and his exertions, while the canoe seemed to dance over the waves as it rose and fell with the undulations made by its own motion. Leather-Stocking raised his rifle and freshened the priming, but stood in suspense whether to slay his victim or not.

"Shall I, John or no?" he said. "It seems but a poor advantage to take of the dumb thing, too. I won't; it has taken to the water on its own natur', which is the reason that God has given to a deer, and I'll give it the lake play; so, John, lay out your arm, and mind the turn of the buck; it's easy to catch them, but they'll turn like a snake."

The Indian laughed at the conceit of his friend, but continued to send the canoe forward with a velocity that proceeded much more from skill than his strength. Both of the old men now used the language of the Delawares when they spoke.

"Hugh!" exclaimed Mohegan; "the deer turns his head. Hawk-eye, lift your spear."

Natty never moved abroad without taking with him every implement that might, by possibility, be of service in his pursuits. From his rifle he never parted; and although intending to fish with the line, the canoe was invariably furnished with all of its utensils, even to its grate. This precaution grew out of the habits of the hunter, who was often led, by his necessities or his sports, far beyond the limits of his original destination. A few years earlier than the date of our tale, the Leather-Stocking had left his hut on the shores of the Otsego, with his rifle and his hounds, for a few days' hunting in the hills; but before he returned he had seen the waters of Ontario. One, two, or even three hundred miles had once been nothing to his sinews, which were now a little stiffened by age. The hunter did as Mohegan advised, and prepared to strike a blow with the barbed weapon into the neck of the buck.

"Lay her more to the left, John," he cried, "lay her more to the left; another stroke of the paddle and I have him."

While speaking he raised the spear, and darted it front him like an arrow. At that instant the buck turned, the long pole glanced by him, the iron striking against his horn, and buried itself harmlessly in the lake.

"Back water," cried Natty, as the canoe glided over the place where the spear had fallen; "hold water, John."

The pole soon reappeared, shooting up from the lake, and, as the hunter seized it in his hand, the Indian whirled the light canoe round, and renewed the chase. But this evolution gave the buck a great advantage; and it also allowed time for Edwards to approach the scene of action.

"Hold your hand, Natty!" cried the youth, "hold your hand; remember it is out of season."

This remonstrance was made as the batteau arrived close to the place where the deer was struggling with the water, his back now rising to the surface, now sinking beneath it, as the waves curled from his neck, the animal still sustaining itself nobly against the odds,

"Hurrah!" shouted Edwards, inflamed beyond prudence at the sight; "mind him as he doubles—mind him as he doubles; sheer more to the right, Mohegan, more to the right, and I'll have him by the horns; I'll throw the rope over his antlers."

The dark eye of the old warrior was dancing in his head with a wild animation, and the sluggish repose in which his aged frame had been resting in the canoe was now changed to all the rapid inflections of practiced agility. The canoe whirled with each cunning

evolution of the chase, like a bubble floating in a whirlpool; and when the direction of the pursuit admitted of a straight course the little bark skimmed the lake with a velocity that urged the deer to seek its safety in some new turn.

It was the frequency of these circuitous movements that, by confining the action to so small a compass, enabled the youth to keep near his companions. More than twenty times both the pursued and the pursuer glided by him, just without the reach of his oars, until he thought the best way to view the sport was to remain stationary, and, by watching a favorable opportunity, assist as much as he could in taking the victim.

He was not required to wait long, for no sooner had he adopted this resolution, and risen in the boat, than he saw the deer coming bravely toward him, with an apparent intention of pushing for a point of land at some distance from the hounds, who were still barking and howling on the shore. Edwards caught the painter of his skiff, and, making a noose, cast it from him with all his force, and luckily succeeded in drawing its knot close around one of the antlers of the buck.

For one instant the skiff was drawn through the water, but in the next the canoe glided before it, and Natty, bending low, passed his knife across the throat of the animal, whose blood followed the wound, dyeing the waters. The short time that was passed in the last struggles of the animal was spent by the hunters in bringing their boats together and securing them in that position, when Leather-Stocking drew the deer from the water and laid its lifeless form in the bottom of the canoe. He placed his hands on the ribs, and on different parts of the body of his prize, and then, raising his head, he laughed in his peculiar manner.

"So much for Marmaduke Temple's law!" he said, "This warms a body's blood, old John: I haven't killed a buck in the lake afore this, sin' many a year. I call that good venison, lad: and I know them that will relish the creatur's steaks for all the betterments in the land."

The Indian had long been drooping with his years, and perhaps under the calamities of his race, but this invigorating and exciting sport caused a gleam of sunshine to cross his swarthy face that had long been absent from his features. It was evident the old man enjoyed the chase more as a memorial of his youthful sports and deeds than with any expectation of profiting by the success. He felt the deer, however, lightly, his hand already trembling with the reaction of his unusual exertions, and smiled with a nod of approbation, as he said, in the emphatic and sententious manner of his people:

"Good."

"I am afraid, Natty," said Edwards, when the heat of the moment had passed, and his blood began to cool, "that we have all been equally transgressors of the law. But keep your own counsel, and there are none here to betray us. Yet how came those dogs at large? I left them securely fastened, I know, for I felt the thongs and examined the knots when I was at the hunt."

"It has been too much for the poor things," said Natty, "to have such a buck take the wind of them. See, lad, the pieces of the buckskin are hanging from their necks yet. Let us paddle up, John, and I will call them in and look a little into the matter."

When the old hunter landed and examined the thongs that were yet fast to the hounds, his countenance sensibly changed, and he shook his head doubtfully.

"Here has been a knife at work," he said; "this skin was never torn, nor is this the mark of a hound's tooth. No, no—Hector is not in fault, as I feared."

"Has the leather been cut?" cried Edwards.

"No, no—I didn't say it had been cut, lad; but this is a mark that was never made by a jump or a bite."

"Could that rascally carpenter have dared!"

"Ay! he durst do anything when there is no danger," said Natty; "he is a curious body, and loves to be helping other people on with their consarns. But he had best not harbor so much near the wigwam!"

In the mean time, Mohegan had been examining, with an Indian's sagacity, the place where the leather thong had been separated. After scrutinizing it closely, he said, in Delaware:

"It was cut with a knife—a sharp blade and a long handle—the man was afraid of the dogs."

"How is this, Mohegan?" exclaimed Edwards; "you saw it not! how can you know these facts?"

"Listen, son," said the warrior. "The knife was sharp, for the cut was smooth; the handle was long, for a man's arm would not reach from this gash to the cut that did not go through the skin; he was a coward, or he would have cut the thongs around the necks of the hounds."

"On my life," cried Natty, "John is on the scent! It was the carpenter; and he has got on the rock back of the kennel and let the dogs loose by fastening his knife to a stick. It would be an easy matter to do it where a man is so minded."

"And why should he do so?" asked Edwards; "who has done him wrong, that he should trouble two old men like you?"

"It's a hard matter, lad, to know men's ways, I find, since the settlers have brought in their new fashions, But is there nothing to be found out in the place? and maybe he is troubled with his longings after other people's business, as he often is."

"Your suspicions are just. Give me the canoe; I am young and strong, and will get down there yet, perhaps, in time to interrupt his plans. Heaven forbid that we should be at the mercy of such a man!"

His proposal was accepted, the deer being placed in the skiff in order to lighten the canoe, and in less than five minutes the little vessel of bark was gliding over the glassy lake, and was soon hid by the points of land as it shot close along the shore.

Mohegan followed slowly with the skiff, while Natty called his hounds to him, bade them keep close, and, shouldering his rifle, he ascended the mountain, with an intention of going to the hut by land.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Ask me not what the maiden feels,  
Left in that dreadful hour alone:  
Perchance, her reason stoops, or reel!  
Perchance, a courage not her own  
Braces her mind to desperate tone."  
—Scott.

While the chase was occurring on the lake, Miss Temple and her companion pursued their walk on the mountain. Male attendants on such excursions were thought to be altogether unnecessary, for none were even known to offer insult to a female who respected herself. After the embarrassment created by the parting discourse with Edwards had dissipated, the girls maintained a conversation that was as innocent and cheerful as themselves.

The path they took led them but a short distance above the hut of Leather-Stocking, and there was a point in the road which commanded a bird's-eye view of the sequestered spot.

From a feeling that might have been, natural, and must have been powerful, neither of the friends, in their frequent and confidential dialogues, had ever trusted herself to utter one syllable concerning the equivocal situation in which the young man who was now so intimately associated with them had been found. If Judge Temple had deemed it prudent to make any inquiries on the subject, he had also thought it proper to keep the answers to him self; though it was so common an occurrence to find the well-educated youth of the Eastern States in every stage of their career to wealth, that the simple circumstance of his intelligence, connected with his poverty, would not, at that day and in that country, have excited any very powerful curiosity. With his breeding, it might have been different; but the youth himself had so effectually guarded against surprise on this subject, by his cold and even, in some cases, rude deportment, that when his manners seemed to soften by time, the Judge, if he thought about it at all, would have been most likely to imagine that the improvement was the result of his late association. But women are always more alive to such subjects than men; and what the abstraction of the father had overlooked, the observation of the daughter had easily detected. In the thousand little courtesies of polished life she had early discovered that Edwards was not wanting, though his gentleness was so often crossed by marks of what she conceived to be fierce and uncontrollable passions. It may, perhaps, be unnecessary to tell the reader that Louisa Grant never reasoned so much after the fashions of the world. The gentle girl, however, had her own thoughts on the subject, and, like others, she drew her own conclusions.

"I would give all my other secrets, Louisa," exclaimed Miss Temple, laughing, and shaking back her dark locks, with a look of childish simplicity that her intelligent face seldom expressed, "to be mistress of all that those rude logs have heard and witnessed."

They were both looking at the secluded hut at the instant, and Miss Grant raised her mild eyes as she answered:

"I am sure they would tell nothing to the disadvantage of Mr. Edwards."

"Perhaps not; but they might, at least, tell who he is."

"Why, dear Miss Temple, we know all that already. I have heard it all very rationally explained by your cousin—"

"The executive chief! he can explain anything. His ingenuity will one day discover the philosopher's stone. But what did he say?"

"Say!" echoed Louisa, with a look of surprise; "why, everything that seemed to me to be satisfactory, and I now believed it to be true. He said that Natty Bumppo had lived most of his life in the woods and among the Indians, by which means he had formed an acquaintance with old John, the Delaware chief."

"Indeed! that was quite a matter-of-fact tale for Cousin Dickon. What came next?"

"I believe he accounted for their close intimacy by some story about the Leather-Stocking saving the life of John in a battle."

"Nothing more likely," said Elizabeth, a little impatiently; "but what is all this to the purpose?"

"Nay, Elizabeth, you must bear with my ignorance, and I will repeat all that I remember to have overheard for the dialogue was between my father and the sheriff, so lately as the last time they met. He then added that the kings of England used to keep gentlemen as agents among the different tribes of Indians, and sometimes officers in the army, who frequently passed half their lives on the edge of the wilderness."

"Told with wonderful historical accuracy! And did he end there?"

"Oh! no—then he said that these agents seldom married; and—and—they must have been wicked men, Elizabeth! but I assure you he said so."

"Never mind," said Miss Temple, blushing and smiling, though so slightly that both were unheeded by her companion; "skip all that."

"Well, then, he said that they often took great pride in the education of their children, whom they frequently sent to England, and even to the colleges; and this is the way that he accounts for the liberal manner in which Mr. Edwards has been taught; for he acknowledges that he knows almost as much as your father—or mine—or even himself."

"Quite a climax in learning! And so he made Mohegan the granduncle or grandfather of Oliver Edwards."

"You have heard him yourself, then?" said Louisa.

"Often; but not on this subject. Mr. Richard Jones, you know, dear, has a theory for everything; but has he one which will explain the reason why that hut is the only habitation within fifty miles of us whose door is not open to every person who may choose to lift its

latch?"

"I have never heard him say anything on this subject," returned the clergyman's daughter; "but I suppose that, as they are poor, they very naturally are anxious to keep the little that they honestly own. It is sometimes dangerous to be rich, Miss Temple; but you cannot know how hard it is to be very, very poor."

"Nor you, I trust, Louisa; at least I should hope that, in this land of abundance, no minister of the church could be left in absolute suffering."

"There cannot be actual misery," returned the other, in a low and humble tone, "where there is a dependence on our Maker; but there may be such suffering as will cause the heart to ache."

"But not you—not you," said the impetuous Elizabeth—"not you, dear girl, you have never known the misery that is connected with poverty."

"Ah! Miss Temple, you little understand the troubles of this life, I believe. My father has spent many years as a missionary in the new countries, where his people were poor, and frequently we have been without bread; unable to buy, and ashamed to beg, because we would not disgrace his sacred calling. But how often have I seen him leave his home, where the sick and the hungry felt, when he left them, that they had lost their only earthly friend, to ride on a duty which could not be neglected for domestic evils! Oh! how hard it must be to preach consolation to others when your own heart is bursting with anguish!"

"But it is all over now! your father's income must now be equal to his wants—it must be—it shall be—"

"It is," replied Louisa, dropping her head on her bosom to conceal the tears which flowed in spite of her gentle Christianity—"for there are none left to be supplied but me."

The turn the conversation had taken drove from the minds of the young maidens all other thoughts but those of holy charity; and Elizabeth folded her friend in her arms, when the latter gave vent to her momentary grief in audible sobs. When this burst of emotion had subsided, Louisa raised her mild countenance, and they continued their walk in silence.

By this time they had gained the summit of the mountain, where they left the highway, and pursued their course under the shade of the stately trees that crowned the eminence. The day was becoming warm, and the girls plunged more deeply into the forest, as they found its invigorating coolness agreeably contrasted to the excessive heat they had experienced in the ascent. The conversation, as if by mutual consent, was entirely changed to the little incidents and scenes of their walk, and every tall pine, and every shrub or flower, called forth some simple expression of admiration.

In this manner they proceeded along the margin of the precipice, catching occasional glimpses of the placid Otsego, or pausing to listen to the rattling of wheels and the sounds of hammers that rose from the valley, to mingle the signs of men with the scenes of nature, when Elizabeth suddenly started, and exclaimed:

"Listen! there are the cries of a child on this mountain! Is there a clearing near us, or can some little one have strayed from its parents?"

"Such things frequently happen," returned Louisa. "Let us follow the sounds; it may be a wanderer starving on the hill."

Urged by this consideration, the females pursued the low, mournful sounds, that proceeded from the forest, with quick and impatient steps. More than once, the ardent Elizabeth was on the point of announcing that she saw the sufferer, when Louisa caught her by the arm, and pointing behind them, cried:

"Look at the dog!"

Brave had been their companion, from the time the voice of his young mistress lured him from his kennel, to the present moment. His advanced age had long before deprived him of his activity; and when his companions stopped to view the scenery, or to add to their bouquets, the mastiff would lay his huge frame on the ground and await their movements, with his eyes closed, and a listlessness in his air that ill accorded with the character of a protector. But when, aroused by this cry from Louisa, Miss Temple turned, she saw the dog with his eyes keenly set on some distant object, his head bent near the ground, and his hair actually rising on his body, through fright or anger. It was most probably the latter, for he was growling in a low key, and occasionally showing his teeth, in a manner that would have terrified his mistress, had she not so well known his good qualities.

"Brave!" she said, "be quiet, Brave! What do you see, fellow?"

At the sounds of her voice, the rage of the mastiff, instead of being at all diminished, was very sensibly increased. He stalked in front of the ladies, and seated himself at the feet of his mistress, growling louder than before, and occasionally giving vent to his ire by a short, surly barking.

"What does he see?" said Elizabeth; "there must be some animal in sight."

Hearing no answer from her companion, Miss Temple turned her head and beheld Louisa, standing with her face whitened to the color of death, and her finger pointing upward with a sort of flickering, convulsed motion. The quick eye of Elizabeth glanced in the direction indicated by her friend, where she saw the fierce front and glaring eyes of a female panther, fixed on them in horrid malignity, and threatening to leap.

"Let us fly," exclaimed Elizabeth, grasping the arm of Louisa, whose form yielded like melting snow.

There was not a single feeling in the temperament of Elizabeth Temple that could prompt her to desert a companion in such an extremity. She fell on her knees by the side of the inanimate Louisa, tearing from the person of her friend, with instinctive readiness, such parts of her dress as might obstruct her respiration, and encouraging their only safeguard, the dog, at the same time, by the sounds of her voice.

"Courage, Brave!" she cried, her own tones beginning to tremble, "courage, courage, good Brave!"

A quarter-grown cub, that had hitherto been unseen, now appeared, dropping from the branches of a sapling that grew under the

shade of the beech which held its dam. This ignorant but vicious creature approached the dog, imitating the actions and sounds of its parent, but exhibiting a strange mixture of the playfulness of a kitten with the ferocity of its race. Standing on its hind-legs, it would rend the bark of a tree with its fore-paws, and play the antics of a cat; and then, by lashing itself with its tail, growling, and scratching the earth, it would at tempt the manifestations of anger that rendered its parent so terrific.

All this time Brave stood firm and undaunted, his short tail erect, his body drawn backward on its haunches, and his eyes following the movements of both dam and cub. At every gambol played by the latter, it approached nigher to the dog, the growling of the three becoming more horrid at each moment, until the younger beast, over-leaping its intended bound, fell directly before the mastiff. There was a moment of fearful cries and struggles, but they ended almost as soon as commenced, by the cub appearing in the air, hurled from the jaws of Brave, with a violence that sent it against a tree so forcibly as to render it completely senseless. Elizabeth witnessed the short struggle, and her blood was warming with the triumph of the dog, when she saw the form of the old panther in the air, springing twenty feet from the branch of the beech to the back of the mastiff. No words of ours can describe the fury of the conflict that followed. It was a confused struggle on the dry leaves, accompanied by loud and terrific cries. Miss Temple continued on her knees, bending over the form of Louisa, her eyes fixed on the animals with an interest so horrid, and yet so intense, that she almost forgot her own stake in the result. So rapid and vigorous were the bounds of the inhabitant of the forest, that its active frame seemed constantly in the air, while the dog nobly faced his foe at each successive leap. When the panther lighted on the shoulders of the mastiff, which was its constant aim, old Brave, though torn with her talons, and stained with his own blood, that already flowed from a dozen wounds, would shake off his furious foe like a feather, and, rearing on his hind-legs, rush to the fray again, with jaws distended, and a dauntless eye. But age, and his pampered life, greatly disqualified the noble mastiff for such a struggle. In everything but courage, he was only the vestige of what he had once been. A higher bound than ever raised the wary and furious beast far beyond the reach of the dog, who was making a desperate but fruitless dash at her, from which she alighted in a favorable position, on the back of her aged foe. For a single moment only could the panther remain there, the great strength of the dog returning with a convulsive effort. But Elizabeth saw, as Brave fastened his teeth in the side of his enemy, that the collar of brass around his neck, which had been glittering throughout the fray, was of the color of blood, and directly that his frame was sinking to the earth, where it soon lay prostrate and helpless. Several mighty efforts of the wild-cat to extricate herself from the jaws of the dog followed, but they were fruitless, until the mastiff turned on his back, his lips collapsed, and his teeth loosened, when the short convulsions and stillness that succeeded announced the death of poor Brave.

Elizabeth now lay wholly at the mercy of the beast. There is said to be something in the front of the image of the Maker that daunts the hearts of the inferior beings of his creation; and it would seem that some such power, in the present instance, suspended the threatened blow. The eyes of the monster and the kneeling maiden met for an instant, when the former stooped to examine her fallen foe; next, to scent her luckless cub. From the latter examination it turned, however, with its eyes apparently emitting flashes of fire, its tail lashing its sides furiously, and its claws projecting inches from her broad feet.

Miss Temple did not or could not move. Her hands were clasped in the attitude of prayer, but her eyes were still drawn to her terrible enemy—her cheeks were blanched to the whiteness of marble, and her lips were slightly separated with horror.

The moment seemed now to have arrived for the fatal termination, and the beautiful figure of Elizabeth was bowing meekly to the stroke, when a rustling of leaves behind seemed rather to mock the organs than to meet her ears.

“Hist! hist!” said a low voice, “stoop lower, gal; your bonnet hides the creatur’s head.”

It was rather the yielding of nature than a compliance with this unexpected order, that caused the head of our heroine to sink on her bosom; when she heard the report of the rifle, the whizzing of the bullet, and the enraged cries of the beast, who was rolling over on the earth, biting its own flesh, and tearing the twigs and branches within its reach. At the next instant the form of the Leather-Stocking rushed by her, and he called aloud:

“Come in, Hector! come in, old fool; ’tis a hard-lived animal, and may jump agin.”

Natty fearlessly maintained his position in front of the females, notwithstanding the violent bounds and threatening aspect of the wounded panther, which gave several indications of returning strength and ferocity, until his rifle was again loaded, when he stepped up to the enraged animal, and, placing the muzzle close to its head, every spark of life was extinguished by the discharge.

The death of her terrible enemy appeared to Elizabeth like a resurrection from her own grave. There was an elasticity in the mind of our heroine that rose to meet the pressure of instant danger, and the more direct it had been, the more her nature had struggled to overcome them. But still she was a woman. Had she been left to herself in her late extremity, she would probably have used her faculties to the utmost, and with discretion, in protecting her person; but, encumbered with her inanimate friend, retreat was a thing not to be attempted. Notwithstanding the fearful aspect of her foe, the eye of Elizabeth had never shrunk from its gaze, and long after the event her thoughts would recur to her passing sensations, and the sweetness of her midnight sleep would be disturbed, as her active fancy conjured, in dreams, the most trifling movements of savage fury that the beast had exhibited in its moment of power.

We shall leave the reader to imagine the restoration of Louisa’s senses, and the expressions of gratitude which fell from the young women. The former was effected by a little water, that was brought from one of the thousand springs of those mountains, in the cap of the Leather-Stocking; and the latter were uttered with the warmth that might be expected from the character of Elizabeth. Natty received her vehement protestations of gratitude with a simple expression of good-will, and with indulgence for her present excitement, but with a carelessness that showed how little he thought of the service he had rendered.

“Well, well,” he said, “be it so, gal; let it be so, if you wish it—we’ll talk the thing over another time. Come, come—let us get into the road, for you’ve had terror enough to make you wish yourself in your father’s house agin.”

This was uttered as they were proceeding, at a pace that was adapted to the weakness of Louisa, toward the highway; on reaching which the ladies separated from their guide, declaring themselves equal to the remainder of the walk without his assistance, and feeling encouraged by the sight of the village which lay beneath their feet like a picture, with its limpid lake in front, the winding stream along

its margin, and its hundred chimneys of whitened bricks.

The reader need not be told the nature of the emotions which two youthful, ingenuous, and well-educated girls would experience at their escape from a death so horrid as the one which had impended over them, while they pursued their way in silence along the track on the side of the mountain; nor how deep were their mental thanks to that Power which had given them their existence, and which had not deserted them in their extremity; neither how often they pressed each other's arms as the assurance of their present safety came, like a healing balm, athwart their troubled spirits, when their thoughts were recurring to the recent moments of horror.

Leather-Stocking remained on the hill, gazing after their retiring figures, until they were hidden by a bend in the road, when he whistled in his dogs, and shouldering his rifle, he returned into the forest.

"Well, it was a skeary thing to the young creatur's," said Natty, while he retrod the path toward the plain. "It might frighten an older woman, to see a she-painter so near her, with a dead cub by its side. I wonder if I had aimed at the varmint's eye, if I shouldn't have touched the life sooner than in the forehead; but they are hard-lived animals, and it was a good shot, consid'ring that I could see nothing but the head and the peak of its tail. Hah! who goes there?"

"How goes it, Natty?" said Mr. Doolittle, stepping out of the bushes, with a motion that was a good deal accelerated by the sight of the rifle, that was already lowered in his direction. "What! shooting this warm day! Mind, old man, the law don't get hold on you."

"The law, squire! I have shook hands with the law these forty year," returned Natty; "for what has a man who lives in the wilderness to do with the ways of the law?"

"Not much, maybe," said Hiram; "but you sometimes trade in venison. I s'pose you know, Leather-Stocking, that there is an act passed to lay a fine of five pounds currency, or twelve dollars and fifty cents, by decimals, on every man who kills a deer betwixt January and August. The Judge had a great hand in getting the law through."

"I can believe it," returned the old hunter; "I can believe that or anything of a man who carries on as he does in the country."

"Yes, the law is quite positive, and the Judge is bent on putting it in force—five pounds penalty. I thought I heard your hounds out on the scent of so'thing this morning; I didn't know but they might get you in difficulty."

"They know their manners too well," said Natty carelessly. "And how much goes to the State's evidence, squire?"

"How much?" repeated Hiram, quailing under the honest but sharp look of the hunter; "the informer gets half, I—I believe—yes, I guess it's half. But there's blood on your sleeve, man—you haven't been shooting anything this morning?"

"I have, though," said the hunter, nodding his head significantly to the other, "and a good shot I made of it."

"H-e-m!" ejaculated the magistrate; "and where is the game? I s'pose it's of a good natur', for your dogs won't hunt anything that isn't choice."

"They'll hunt anything I tell them to, squire," cried Natty, favoring the other with his laugh. "They'll hunt you, if I say so. He-e-e-re, he-e-e-re, Hector—he-e-e-re, slut—come this a-way, pups—come this a-way—come hither."

"Oh! I have always heard a good character of the dogs," returned Mr. Doolittle, quickening his pace by raising each leg in rapid succession, as the hounds scented around his person. "And where is the game, Leather-Stocking?"

During this dialogue, the speakers had been walking at a very fast gait, and Natty swung the end of his rifle round, pointing through the bushes, and replied: "There lies one. How do you like such meat?"

"This!" exclaimed Hiram; "why, this is Judge Temple's dog Brave. Take care, Leather-Stocking, and don't make an enemy of the Judge. I hope you haven't harmed the animal?"

"Look for yourself, Mr. Doolittle," said Natty, drawing his knife from his girdle, and wiping it in a knowing manner, once or twice across his garment of buckskin; "does his throat look as if I had cut it with this knife?"

"It is dreadfully torn! it's an awful wound—no knife ever did this deed. Who could have done it?"

"The painters behind you, squire."

"Painters!" echoed Hiram, whirling on his heel with an agility that would have done credit to a dancing' master.

"Be easy, man," said Natty; "there's two of the venomous things; but the dog finished one, and I have fastened the other's jaws for her; so don't be frightened, squire; they won't hurt you."

"And where's the deer?" cried Hiram, staring about him with a bewildered air.

"Anan? deer!" repeated Natty. "Sartain; an't there venison here, or didn't you kill a buck?"

"What! when the law forbids the thing, squire!" said the old hunter, "I hope there's no law agin' killing the painters."

"No! there's a bounty on the scalps—but—will your dogs hunt painters, Natty?"

"Anything; didn't I tell you they would hunt a man? He-e-re, he-e-re, pups—"

"Yes, yes, I remember. Well, they are strange dogs, I must say—I am quite in a wonderment."

Natty had seated himself on the ground, and having laid the grim head of his late ferocious enemy in his lap, was drawing his knife with a practiced hand around the ears, which he tore from the head of the beast in such a manner as to preserve their connection, when he answered;

"What at, squire? did you never see a painter's scalp afore? Come, you are a magistrate, I wish you'd make me out an order for the bounty."

"The bounty!" repeated Hiram, holding the ears on the end of his finger for a moment, as if uncertain how to proceed. "Well, let us go down to your hut, where you can take the oath, and I will write out the order, I sup pose you have a Bible? All the law wants is the four evangelists and the Lord's prayer."

"I keep no books," said Natty, a little coldly; "not such a Bible as the law needs."

"Oh! there's but one sort of Bible that's good in law," returned the magistrate, "and your'n will do as well as another's. Come, the carcasses are worth nothing, man; let us go down and take the oath."

"Softly, softly, squire," said the hunter, lifting his trophies very deliberately from the ground, and shouldering his rifle; "why do you want an oath at all, for a thing that your own eyes has seen? Won't you believe yourself, that another man must swear to a fact that you know to be true? You have seen me scalp the creatur's, and if I must swear to it, it shall be before Judge Temple, who needs an oath."

"But we have no pen or paper here, Leather-Stocking; we must go to the hut for them, or how can I write the order?"

Natty turned his simple features on the cunning magistrate with another of his laughs, as he said:

"And what should I be doing with scholars' tools? I want no pens or paper, not knowing the use of either; and I keep none. No, no, I'll bring the scalps into the village, squire, and you can make out the order on one of your law-books, and it will be all the better for it. The deuce take this leather on the neck of the dog, it will strangle the old fool. Can you lend me a knife, squire?"

Hiram, who seemed particularly anxious to be on good terms with his companion, unhesitatingly complied. Natty cut the thong from the neck of the hound, and, as he returned the knife to its owner, carelessly remarked:

"Tis a good bit of steel, and has cut such leather as this very same, before now, I dare say."

"Do you mean to charge me with letting your hounds loose?" exclaimed Hiram, with a consciousness that disarmed his caution.

"Loose!" repeated the hunter—"I let them loose myself. I always let them loose before I leave the hut."

The ungovernable amazement with which Mr. Doolittle listened to this falsehood would have betrayed his agency in the liberation of the dogs, had Natty wanted any further confirmation; and the coolness and management of the old man now disappeared in open indignation.

"Look you here, Mr. Doolittle," he said, striking the breech of his rifle violently on the ground; "what there is in the wigwam of a poor man like me, that one like you can crave, I don't know; but this I tell you to your face, that you never shall put foot under the roof of my cabin with my consent, and that, if you harbor round the spot as you have done lately, you may meet with treatment that you will little relish."

"And let me tell you, Mr. Bumpo," said Hiram, retreating, however, with a quick step, "that I know you've broke the law, and that I'm a magistrate, and will make you feel it too, before you are a day older."

"That for you and your law, too," cried Natty, snap ping his fingers at the justice of the peace; "away with you, you varmint, before the devil tempts me to give you your desarts. Take care, if I ever catch your prowling face in the woods agin, that I don't shoot it for an owl."

There is something at all times commanding in honest indignation, and Hiram did not stay to provoke the wrath of the old hunter to extremities. When the intruder was out of sight, Natty proceeded to the hut, where he found all quiet as the grave. He fastened his dogs, and tapping at the door, which was opened by Edwards, asked;

"Is all safe, lad?"

"Everything," returned the youth. "Some one attempted the lock, but it was too strong for him."

"I know the creatur'," said Natty, "but he'll not trust himself within the reach of my rifle very soon——" What more was uttered by the Leather-Stocking, in his vexation, was rendered inaudible by the closing of the door of the cabin.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

"It is noised, he hath a mass of treasure."  
—Timon of Athens.

When Marmaduke Temple and his cousin rode through the gate of the former, the heart of the father had been too recently touched with the best feelings of our nature, to leave inclination for immediate discourse. There was an importance in the air of Richard, which would not have admitted of the ordinary informal conversation of the sheriff, without violating all the rules of consistency; and the equestrians pursued their way with great diligence, for more than a mile, in profound silence. At length the soft expression of parental affection was slowly chased from the handsome features of the Judge, and was gradually supplanted by the cast of humor and benevolence that was usually seated on his brow.

"Well, Dickon," he said, "since I have yielded myself so far implicitly to your guidance, I think the moment has arrived when I am entitled to further confidence. Why and wherefore are we journeying together in this solemn gait?"

The sheriff gave a loud hem, that rang far in the forest, and keeping his eyes fixed on objects before him like a man who is looking deep into futurity:

"There has always been one point of difference between us, Judge Temple, I may say, since our nativity," he replied; "not that I would insinuate that you are at all answerable for the acts of Nature; for a man is no more to be condemned for the misfortunes of his birth, than he is to be commended for the natural advantages he may possess; but on one point we may be said to have differed from our births, and they, you know, occurred within two days of each other."

"I really marvel, Richard, what this one point can be, for, to my eyes, we seem to differ so materially, and so often—"

"Mere consequences, sir," interrupted the sheriff; "all our minor differences proceed from one cause, and that is, our opinions of the universal attainments of genius."

"In what, Dickon?"

"I speak plain English, I believe, Judge Temple: at least I ought; for my father, who taught me, could speak——"

"Greek and Latin," interrupted Marmaduke. "I well know the qualifications of your family in tongues, Dickon. But proceed to the point; why are we travelling over this mountain to-day?"

"To do justice to any subject, sir, the narrator must be suffered to proceed in his own way," continued the sheriff. "You are of opinion, Judge Temple, that a man is to be qualified by nature and education to do only one thing well, whereas I know that genius will supply the place of learning, and that a certain sort of man can do anything and everything."

"Like yourself, I suppose," said Marmaduke, smiling.

"I scorn personalities, sir, I say nothing of myself; but there are three men on your Patent, of the kind that I should term talented by nature for her general purposes though acting under the influence of different situations."

"We are better off, then, than I had supposed. Who are these triumviri?"

"Why, sir, one is Hiram Doolittle; a carpenter by trade, as you know—and I need only point to the village to exhibit his merits. Then he is a magistrate, and might shame many a man, in his distribution of justice, who has had better opportunities."

"Well, he is one," said Marmaduke, with the air of a man that was determined not to dispute the point.

"Jotham Riddel is another."

"Who?"

"Jotham Riddel."

"What, that dissatisfied, shiftless, lazy, speculating fellow! he who changes his county every three years, his farm every six months, and his occupation every season! an agriculturist yesterday, a shoemaker to-day, and a school master to-morrow! that epitome of all the unsteady and profitless propensities of the settlers without one of their good qualities to counterbalance the evil! Nay, Richard, this is too bad for even—but the third."

"As the third is not used to hearing such comments on his character, Judge Temple, I shall not name him."

"The amount of all this, then, Dickon, is that the trio, of which you are one, and the principal, have made some important discovery."

"I have not said that I am one, Judge Temple. As I told you before, say nothing egotistical. But a discovery has been made, and you are deeply interested in it."

"Proceed—I am all ears."

"No, no, 'Duke, you are bad enough, I own, but not so bad as that, either; your ears are not quite full grown."

The sheriff laughed heartily at his own wit, and put himself in good humor thereby, when he gratified his patient cousin with the following explanation:

"You know, 'Duke, there is a man living on your estate that goes by the name of Natty Bumppo. Here has this man lived, by what I can learn, for more than forty years—by himself, until lately; and now with strange companions."

"Part very true, and all very probable," said the Judge.

"All true, sir; all true. Well, within these last few months have appeared as his companions an old Indian chief, the last, or one of the last of his tribe that is to be found in this part of the country, and a young man, who is said to be the son of some Indian agent, by a

squaw.”

“Who says that?” cried Marmaduke, with an interest; that he had not manifested before.

“Who? why, common sense—common report—the hue and cry. But listen till you know all. This youth has very pretty talents—yes, what I call very pretty talents—and has been well educated, has seen very tolerable company, and knows how to behave himself when he has a mind to. Now, Judge Temple, can you tell me what has brought three such men as Indian John, Natty Bumppo, and Oliver Edwards together?” Marmaduke turned his countenance, in evident surprise, to his cousin, and replied quickly:

“Thou hast unexpectedly hit on a subject, Richard, that has often occupied my mind. But knowest thou anything of this mystery, or are they only the crude conjectures of—”

“Crude nothing, 'Duke, crude nothing: but facts, stub-born facts. You know there are mines in these mountains; I have often heard you say that you believed in their existence.”

“Reasoning from analogy, Richard, but not with any certainty of the fact.”

“You have heard them mentioned, and have seen specimens of the ore, sir; you will not deny that! and, reasoning from analogy, as you say, if there be mines in South America, ought there not to be mines in North America too?”

“Nay, nay, I deny nothing, my cousin. I certainly have heard many rumors of the existence of mines in these hills: and I do believe that I have seen specimens of the precious metals that have been found here. It would occasion me no surprise to learn that tin and silver, or what I consider of more consequence, good coal—”

“Damn your coal,” cried the sheriff; “who wants to find coal in these forests? No, no—silver, 'Duke; silver is the one thing needful, and silver is to be found. But listen: you are not to be told that the natives have long known the use of gold and silver; now who so likely to be acquainted where they are to be found as the ancient inhabitants of a country? I have the best reasons for believing that both Mohegan and the Leather-Stocking have been privy to the existence of a mine in this very mountain for many years.”

The sheriff had now touched his cousin in a sensitive spot; and Marmaduke lent a more attentive ear to the speaker, who, after waiting a moment to see the effect of this extraordinary development, proceeded:

“Yes, sir, I have my reasons, and at a proper time you shall know them.”

“No time is so good as the present.”

“Well, well, be attentive,” continued Richard, looking cautiously about him, to make certain that no eavesdropper was hid in the forest, though they were in constant motion. “I have seen Mohegan and the Leather-Stocking, with my own eyes—and my eyes are as good as anybody's eyes—I have seen them, I say, both going up the mountain and coming down it, with spades and picks; and others have seen them carrying things into their hut, in a secret and mysterious manner, after dark. Do you call this a fact of importance?”

The Judge did not reply, but his brow had contracted, with a thoughtfulness that he always wore when much interested, and his eyes rested on his cousin in expectation of hearing more. Richard continued:

“It was ore. Now, sir, I ask if you can tell me who this Mr. Oliver Edwards is, that has made a part of your household since Christmas?”

Marmaduke again raised his eyes, but continued silent, shaking his head in the negative.

“That he is a half-breed we know, for Mohegan does not scruple to call him openly his kinsman; that he is well educated we know. But as to his business here—do you remember that about a month before this young man made his appearance among us, Natty was absent from home several days? You do; for you inquired for him, as you wanted some venison to take to your friends, when you went for Bess. Well, he was not to be found. Old John was left in the hut alone, and when Natty did appear, although he came on in the night, he was seen drawing one of those jumpers that they carry their grain to mill in, and to take out something with great care, that he had covered up under his bear-skins. Now let me ask you, Judge Temple, what motive could induce a man like the Leather-Stocking to make a sled, and toil with a load over these mountains, if he had nothing but his rifle or his ammunition to carry?”

“They frequently make these jumpers to convey their game home, and you say he had been absent many days.”

“How did he kill it? His rifle was in the village, to be mended. No, no—that he was gone to some unusual place is certain; that he brought back some secret utensils is more certain; and that he has not allowed a soul to approach his hut since is most certain of all.”

“He was never fond of intruders——”

“I know it,” interrupted Richard; “but did he drive them from his cabin morosely? Within a fortnight of his return, this Mr. Edwards appears. They spend whole days in the mountains, pretending to be shooting, but in reality exploring; the frosts prevent their digging at that time, and he avails himself of a lucky accident to get into good quarters. But even now, he is quite half of his time in that hut—many hours every night. They are smelting, 'Duke they are smelting, and as they grow rich, you grow poor.”

“How much of this is thine own, Richard, and how much comes from others? I would sift the wheat from the chaff.”

“Part is my own, for I saw the jumper, though it was broken up and burnt in a day or two. I have told you that I saw the old man with his spades and picks. Hiram met Natty, as he was crossing the mountain, the night of his arrival with the sled, and very good-naturedly offered—Hiram is good-natured—to carry up part of his load, for the old man had a heavy pull up the back of the mountain, but he wouldn't listen to the thing, and repulsed the offer in such a manner that the squire said he had half a mind to swear the peace against him. Since the snow has been off, more especially after the frosts got out of the ground, we have kept a watchful eye on the gentle man, in which we have found Jotham useful.” Marmaduke did not much like the associates of Richard in this business; still he knew them to be cunning and ready expedients; and as there was certainly something mysterious, not only in the connection between the old hunters and Edwards, but in what his cousin had just related, he began to revolve the subject in his own mind with more care. On reflection, he remembered various circumstances that tended to corroborate these suspicions, and, as the whole business favored one of his infirmities, he yielded the more readily to their impression. The mind of Judge Temple, at all times comprehensive, had received

from his peculiar occupations a bias to look far into futurity, in his speculations on the improvements that posterity were to make in his lands. To his eye, where others saw nothing but a wilderness, towns, manufactories, bridges, canals, mines, and all the other resources of an old country were constantly presenting themselves, though his good sense suppressed, in some degree, the exhibition of these expectations.

As the sheriff allowed his cousin full time to reflect on what he had heard, the probability of some pecuniary adventure being the connecting link in the chain that brought Oliver Edwards into the cabin of Leather-Stocking appeared to him each moment to be stronger. But Marmaduke was too much in the habit of examining both sides of a subject not to perceive the objections, and he reasoned with himself aloud:

"It cannot be so, or the youth would not be driven so near the verge of poverty."

"What so likely to make a man dig for money as being poor?" cried the sheriff.

"Besides, there is an elevation of character about Oliver that proceeds from education, which would forbid so clandestine a proceeding."

"Could an ignorant fellow smelt?" continued Richard.

"Bess hints that he was reduced even to his last shilling when we took him into our dwelling."

"He had been buying tools. And would he spend his last sixpence for a shot at a turkey had he not known where to get more?"

"Can I have possibly been so long a dupe? His manner has been rude to me at times, but I attributed it to his conceiving himself injured, and to his mistaking the forms of the world."

"Haven't you been a dupe all your life, 'Duke, and an't what you call ignorance of forms deep cunning, to conceal his real character?"

"If he were bent on deception, he would have concealed his knowledge, and passed with us for an inferior man."

"He cannot. I could no more pass for a fool, myself, than I could fly. Knowledge is not to be concealed, like a candle under a bushel."

"Richard," said the Judge, turning to his cousin, "there are many reasons against the truth of thy conjectures, but thou hast awakened suspicions which must be satisfied. But why are we travelling here?"

"Jotham, who has been much in the mountain latterly, being kept there by me and Hiram, has made a discovery, which he will not explain, he says, for he is bound by an oath; but the amount is, that he knows where the ore lies, and he has this day begun to dig. I would not consent to the thing, 'Duke, without your knowledge, for the land is yours; and now you know the reason of our ride. I call this a countermine, ha!"

"And where is the desirable spot?" asked the Judge with an air half comical, half serious.

"At hand; and when we have visited that, I will show you one of the places that we have found within a week, where our hunters have been amusing themselves for six months past."

The gentlemen continued to discuss the matter, while their horses picked their way under the branches of the trees and over the uneven ground of the mountain. They soon arrived at the end of their journey, where, in truth, they found Jotham already buried to his neck in a hole that he had been digging.

Marmaduke questioned the miner very closely as to his reasons for believing in the existence of the precious metals near that particular spot; but the fellow maintained an obstinate mystery in his answers. He asserted that he had the best of reasons for what he did, and inquired of the judge what portion of the profits would fall to his own share, in the event of success, with an earnestness that proved his faith. After spending an hour near the place, examining the stones, and searching for the usual indications of the proximity of ore, the Judge remounted and suffered his cousin to lead the way to the place where the mysterious trio had been making their excavation.

The spot chosen by Jotham was on the back of the mountain that overhung the hut of Leather-Stocking, and the place selected by Natty and his companions was on the other side of the same hill, but above the road, and, of course, in an opposite direction to the route taken by the ladies in their walk.

"We shall be safe in approaching the place now," said Richard, while they dismounted and fastened their horses; "for I took a look with the glass, and saw John and Leather-Stocking in their canoe fishing before we left home, and Oliver is in the same pursuit; but these may be nothing but shams to blind our eye; so we will be expeditious, for it would not be pleasant to be caught here by them."

"Not on my own land?" said Marmaduke sternly. "If it be as you suspect, I will know their reasons for making this excavation."

"Mum," said Richard, laying a finger on his lip, and leading the way down a very difficult descent to a sort of natural cavern, which was found in the face of the rock, and was not unlike a fireplace in shape. In front of this place lay a pile of earth, which had evidently been taken from the recess, and part of which was yet fresh. An examination of the exterior of the cavern left the Judge in doubt whether it was one of Nature's frolics that had thrown it into that shape, or whether it had been wrought by the hands of man, at some earlier period. But there could be no doubt that the whole of the interior was of recent formation, and the marks of the pick were still visible where the soft, lead-colored rock had opposed itself to the progress of the miners. The whole formed an excavation of about twenty feet in width, and nearly twice that distance in depth. The height was much greater than was required for the ordinary purposes of experiment, but this was evidently the effect of chance, as the roof of the cavern was a natural stratum of rock that projected many feet beyond the base of the pile. Immediately in front of the recess, or cave, was a little terrace, partly formed by nature, and partly by the earth that had been carelessly thrown aside by the laborers. The mountain fell off precipitously in front of the terrace, and the approach by its sides, under the ridge of the rocks, was difficult and a little dangerous. The whole was wild, rude, and apparently incomplete; for, while looking among the bushes, the sheriff found the very implements that had been used in the work.

When the sheriff thought that his cousin had examined the spot sufficiently, he asked solemnly:

“Judge Temple, are you satisfied?”

“Perfectly, that there is something mysterious and perplexing in this business. It is a secret spot, and cunningly devised, Richard; yet I see no symptoms of ore.”

“Do you expect, sir, to find gold and silver lying like pebbles on the surface of the earth?—dollars and dimes ready coined to your hands? No, no—the treasure must be sought after to be won. But let them mine; I shall countermine.”

The Judge took an accurate survey of the place, and noted in his memorandum-book such marks as were necessary to find it again in the event of Richard's absence; when the cousins returned to their horses.

On reaching the highway they separated, the sheriff to summon twenty-four “good men and true,” to attend as the inquest of the county, on the succeeding Monday, when Marmaduke held his stated court of “common pleas and general sessions of the peace,” and the Judge to return, musing deeply on what he had seen and heard in the course of the morning.

When the horse of the latter reached the spot where the highway fell toward the valley, the eye of Marmaduke rested, it is true, on the same scene that had, ten minutes before, been so soothing to the feelings of his daughter and her friend, as they emerged from the forest; but it rested in vacancy. He threw the reins to his sure footed beast, and suffered the animal to travel at his own gait, while he soliloquized as follows:

“There may be more in this than I at first supposed. I have suffered my feelings to blind my reason, in admitting an unknown youth in this manner to my dwelling; yet this is not the land of suspicion. I will have Leather-Stocking before me, and, by a few direct questions, extract the truth from the simple old man.”

At that instant the Judge caught a glimpse of the figures of Elizabeth and Louisa, who were slowly descending the mountain, short distance before him. He put spurs to his horse, and riding up to them, dismounted, and drove his steed along the narrow path. While the agitated parent was listening to the vivid description that his daughter gave of her recent danger, and her unexpected escape, all thoughts of mines, vested rights, and examinations were absorbed in emotion; and when the image of Natty again crossed his recollection, it was not as a lawless and depredating squatter, but as the preserver of his child.

## CHAPTER XXX.

"The court awards it, and the law doth give it."  
—Merchant of Venice.

Remarkable Pettibone, who had forgotten the wound received by her pride, in contemplation of the ease and comforts of her situation, and who still retained her station in the family of judge Temple, was dispatched to the humble dwelling which Richard already styled "The Rectory," in attendance on Louisa, who was soon consigned to the arms of her father.

In the mean time, Marmaduke and his daughter were closeted for more than an hour, nor shall we invade the sanctuary of parental love, by relating the conversation. When the curtain rises on the reader, the Judge is seen walking up and down the apartment, with a tender melancholy in his air, and his child reclining on a settee, with a flushed cheek, and her dark eyes seeming to float in crystals.

"It was a timely rescue! it was, indeed, a timely rescue, my child!" cried the Judge. "Then thou didst not desert thy friend, my noble Bess?"

"I believe I may as well take the credit of fortitude," said Elizabeth, "though I much doubt if flight would have availed me anything, had I even courage to execute such an intention. But I thought not of the expedient."

"Of what didst thou think, love? where did thy thoughts dwell most, at that fearful moment?"

"The beast! the beast!" cried Elizabeth, veiling her face with her hand. "Oh! I saw nothing, I thought of nothing but the beast. I tried to think of better things, but the horror was too glaring, the danger too much before my eyes."

"Well, well, thou art safe, and we will converse no more on the unpleasant subject. I did not think such an animal yet remained in our forests; but they will stray far from their haunts when pressed by hunger, and—"

A loud knocking at the door of the apartment interrupted what he was about to utter, and he bid the applicant enter. The door was opened by Benjamin, who came in with a discontented air, as if he felt that he had a communication to make that would be out of season.

"Here is Squire Doolittle below, sir," commenced the major-domo. "He has been standing off and on in the door-yard for the matter of a glass; and he has summat on his mind that he wants to heave up, d'ye see; but I tells him, says I, man, would you be coming aboard with your complaints, said I, when the judge has gotten his own child, as it were, out of the jaws of a lion? But damn the bit of manners has the fellow, any more than if he was one of them Guineas down in the kitchen there; and so as he was sheering nearer, every stretch he made toward the house, I could do no better than to let your honor know that the chap was in the offing."

"He must have business of importance," said Marmaduke: "something in relation to his office, most probably, as the court sits so shortly."

"Ay, ay, you have it, sir," cried Benjamin; "it's summat about a complaint that he has to make of the old Leather-Stocking, who, to my judgment, is the better man of the two. It's a very good sort of a man is this Master Bumpo, and he has a way with a spear, all the same as if he was brought up at the bow-oar of the captain's barge, or was born with a boat-hook in his hand."

"Against the Leather-Stocking!" cried Elizabeth, rising from her reclining posture.

"Rest easy, my child; some trifle, I pledge you; I believe I am already acquainted with its import Trust me, Bess, your champion shall be safe in my care. Show Mr. Doolittle in, Benjamin."

Miss Temple appeared satisfied with this assurance, but fastened her dark eyes on the person of the architect, who profited by the permission, and instantly made his appearance.

All the impatience of Hiram seemed to vanish the instant he entered the apartment. After saluting the Judge and his daughter, he took the chair to which Marmaduke pointed, and sat for a minute, composing his straight black hair, with a gravity of demeanor that was intended to do honor to his official station. At length he said:

"It's likely, from what I hear, that Miss Temple had a narrow chance with the painters, on the mountain."

Marmaduke made a gentle inclination of his head, by way of assent, but continued silent.

"I s'pose the law gives a bounty on the scalps," continued Hiram, "in which case the Leather-Stocking will make a good job on't."

"It shall be my care to see that he is rewarded," returned the Judge.

"Yes, yes, I rather guess that nobody hereabouts doubts the Judge's generosity. Does he know whether the sheriff has fairly made up his mind to have a reading desk or a deacon's pew under the pulpit?"

"I have not heard my cousin speak on that subject, lately," replied Marmaduke. "I think it's likely that we will have a pretty dull court on't, from what I can gather. I hear that Jotham Riddel and the man who bought his betterments have agreed to leave their difference to men, and I don't think there'll be more than two civil cases in the calendar."

"I am glad of it," said the judge; "nothing gives me more pain than to see my settlers wasting their time and substance in the unprofitable struggles of the law. I hope it may prove true, sir."

"I rather guess 'twill be left out to men," added Hiram, with an air equally balanced between doubt and assurance, but which judge Temple understood to mean certainty; "I some think that I am appointed a referee in the case myself; Jotham as much as told me that he should take me. The defendant, I guess, means to take Captain Hollister, and we two have partly agreed on Squire Jones for the third man."

"Are there any criminals to be tried?" asked Marmaduke.

"There's the counterfeiters," returned the magistrate, "as they were caught in the act, I think it likely that they'll be indicted, in which case it's probable they'll be tried."

"Certainly, sir; I had forgotten those men. There are no more, I hope." "Why, there is a threaten to come forward with an assault that happened at the last independence day; but I'm not sartain that the law'll take hold on't. There was plaguey hard words passed, but whether they struck or not I haven't heard. There's some folks talk of a deer or two being killed out of season, over on the west side of the Patent, by some of the squatters on the 'Fractions.'"

"Let a complaint be made, by all means," said the Judge; "I am determined to see the law executed to the letter, on all such depredators."

"Why, yes, I thought the judge was of that mind; I came partly on such a business myself."

"You!" exclaimed Marmaduke, comprehending in an instant how completely he had been caught by the other's cunning; "and what have you to say, sir?"

"I some think that Natty Bumppo has the carcass of a deer in his hut at this moment, and a considerable part of my business was to get a search-warrant to examine."

"You think, sir! do you know that the law exacts an oath, before I can issue such a precept? The habitation of a citizen is not to be idly invaded on light suspicion."

"I rather think I can swear to it myself," returned the immovable Hiram; "and Jotham is in the street, and as good as ready to come in and make oath to the same thing."

"Then issue the warrant thyself; thou art a magistrate, Mr. Doolittle; why trouble me with the matter?"

"Why, seeing it's the first complaint under the law, and knowing the judge set his heart on the thing, I thought it best that the authority to search should come from himself. Besides, as I'm much in the woods, among the timber, I don't altogether like making an enemy of the Leather Stocking. Now, the Judge has a weight in the county that puts him above fear."

Miss Temple turned her face to the callous Architect as she said "And what has any honest person to dread from so kind a man as Bumppo?"

"Why, it's as easy, miss, to pull a rifle trigger on a magistrate as on a painter. But if the Judge don't conclude to issue the warrant, I must go home and make it out myself."

"I have not refused your application, sir," said Marmaduke, perceiving at once that his reputation for impartiality was at stake; "go into my office, Mr. Doolittle, where I will join you, and sign the warrant." Judge Temple stopped the remonstrances which Elizabeth was about to utter, after Hiram had withdrawn, by laying his hand on her mouth, and saying:

"It is more terrible in sound than frightful in reality, my child. I suppose that the Leather-Stocking has shot a deer, for the season is nearly over, and you say that he was hunting with his dogs when he came so timely to your assistance. But it will be only to examine his cabin, and find the animal, when you can pay the penalty out of your own pocket, Bess. Nothing short of the twelve dollars and a half will satisfy this harpy, I perceive; and surely my reputation as judge is worth that trifle."

Elizabeth was a good deal pacified with this assurance, and suffered her father to leave her, to fulfil his promise to Hiram.

When Marmaduke left his office after executing his disagreeable duty, he met Oliver Edwards, walking up the gravelled walk in front of the mansion-house with great strides, and with a face agitated by feeling. On seeing judge Temple, the youth turned aside, and with a warmth in his manner that was not often exhibited to Marmaduke, he cried:

"I congratulate you, sir; from the bottom of my soul, I congratulate you, Judge Temple. Oh! it would have been too horrid to have recollected for a moment! I have just left the hut, where, after showing me his scalps, old Natty told me of the escape of the ladies, as the thing to be mentioned last. Indeed, indeed, sir, no words of mine can express half of what I have felt—"the youth paused a moment, as if suddenly recollecting that he was overstepping prescribed limits, and concluded with a good deal of embarrassment—"what I have felt at this danger to Miss—Grant, and—and your daughter, sir."

But the heart of Marmaduke was too much softened to admit his cavilling at trifles, and, without regarding the confusion of the other, he replied:

"I thank thee, thank thee, Oliver; as thou sayest, it is almost too horrid to be remembered. But come, let us hasten to Bess, for Louisa has already gone to the rectory."

The young man sprang forward, and, throwing open a door, barely permitted the Judge to precede him, when he was in the presence of Elizabeth in a moment.

The cold distance that often crossed the demeanor of the heiress, in her intercourse with Edwards, was now entirely banished, and two hours were passed by the party, in the free, unembarrassed, and confiding manner of old and esteemed friends. Judge Temple had forgotten the suspicions engendered during his morning's ride, and the youth and maiden conversed, laughed, and were sad by turns, as impulse directed.

At length, Edwards, after repeating his intention to do so for the third time, left the mansion-house to go to the rectory on a similar errand of friendship.

During this short period, a scene was passing at the hut that completely frustrated the benevolent intentions of Judge Temple in favor of the Leather-Stocking, and at once destroyed the short-lived harmony between the youth and Marmaduke.

When Hiram Doolittle had obtained his search-warrant, his first business was to procure a proper officer to see it executed. The sheriff was absent, summoning in person the grand inquest for the county; the deputy who resided in the village was riding on the same errand, in a different part of the settlement; and the regular constable of the township had been selected for his station from motives of

charity, being lame of a leg. Hiram intended to accompany the officer as a spectator, but he felt no very strong desire to bear the brunt of the battle. It was, however, Saturday, and the sun was already turning the shadows of the pines toward the east; on the morrow the conscientious magistrate could not engage in such an expedition at the peril of his soul and long before Monday, the venison, and all vestiges of the death of the deer, might be secreted or destroyed. Happily, the lounging form of Billy Kirby met his eye, and Hiram, at all time fruitful in similar expedients, saw his way clear at once. Jotham, who was associated in the whole business, and who had left the mountain in consequence of a summons from his coadjutor, but who failed, equally with Hiram, in the unfortunate particular of nerve, was directed to summon the wood-chopper to the dwelling of the magistrate.

When Billy appeared, he was very kindly invited to take the chair in which he had already seated himself, and was treated in all respects as if he were an equal.

"Judge Temple has set his heart on putting the deer law in force," said Hiram, after the preliminary civilities were over, "and a complaint has been laid before him that a deer has been killed. He has issued a search-warrant, and sent for me to get somebody to execute it."

Kirby, who had no idea of being excluded from the deliberative part of any affair in which he was engaged, drew up his bushy head in a reflecting attitude, and after musing a moment, replied by asking a few questions,

"The sheriff has gone out of the way?"

"Not to be found."

"And his deputy too?"

"Both gone on the skirts of the Patent."

"But I saw the constable hobbling about town an hour ago."

"Yes, yes," said Hiram, with a coaxing smile and knowing nod, "but this business wants a man—not a cripple."

"Why," said Billy, laughing, "will the chap make fight?"

"He's a little quarrelsome at times, and thinks he's the best man in the country at rough and tumble."

"I heard him brag once," said Jotham, "that there wasn't a man 'twixt the Mohawk Flats and the Pennsylvania line that was his match at a close hug."

"Did you?" exclaimed Kirby, raising his huge frame in his seat, like a lion stretching in his lair; "I rather guess he never felt a Varmounter's knuckles on his backbone—But who is the chap?"

"Why," said Jotham, "it's—"

"It's agin' law to tell," interrupted Hiram, "unless you'll qualify to sarve. You'd be the very man to take him, Bill, and I'll make out a special deputation in a minute, when you will get the fees."

"What's the fees?" said Kirby, laying his large hand on the leaves of a statute-book that Hiram had opened in order to give dignity to his office, which he turned over in his rough manner, as if he were reflecting on a subject about which he had, in truth, already decided; "will they pay a man for a broken head?"

"They'll be something handsome," said Hiram.

"Damn the fees," said Billy, again laughing—"does the fellow think he's the best wrestler in the county, though? what's his inches?"

"He's taller than you be," said Jotham, "and one of the biggest—"

Talkers, he was about to add, but the impatience of Kirby interrupted him. The wood-chopper had nothing fierce or even brutal in his appearance; the character of his expression was that of good-natured vanity. It was evident he prided himself on the powers of the physical man, like all who have nothing better to boast of; and, stretching out his broad hand, with the palm downward, he said, keeping his eyes fastened on his own bones and sinews:

"Come, give us a touch of the book. I'll swear, and you'll see that I'm a man to keep my oath."

Hiram did not give the wood-chopper time to change his mind, but the oath was administered without unnecessary delay. So soon as this preliminary was completed, the three worthies left the house, and proceeded by the nearest road toward the hut. They had reached the bank of the lake, and were diverging from the route of the highway, before Kirby recollected that he was now entitled to the privilege of the initiated, and repeated his question as to the name of the offender,

"Which way, which way, squire?" exclaimed the hardy wood-chopper; "I thought it was to search a house that you wanted me, not the woods. There is nobody lives on this side of the lake, for six miles, unless you count the Leather-Stocking and old John for settlers. Come, tell me the chap's name, and I warrant me that I lead you to his clearing by a straighter path than this, for I know every sapling that grows within two miles of Templeton."

"This is the way," said Hiram, pointing forward and quickening his step, as if apprehensive that Kirby would desert, "and Bumpo is the man."

Kirby stopped short, and looked from one of his companions to the other in astonishment. He then burst into a loud laugh, and cried:

"Who? Leather-Stocking! He may brag of his aim and his rifle, for he has the best of both, as I will own myself, for sin' he shot the pigeon I knock under to him; but for a wrestle! why, I would take the creatur' between my finger and thumb, and tie him in a bow-knot around my neck for a Barcelony. The man is seventy, and was never anything particular for strength."

"He's a deceiving man," said Hiram, "like all the hunters; he is stronger than he seems; besides, he has his rifle."

"That for his rifle!" cried Billy; "he'd no more hurt me with his rifle than he'd fly. He's a harmless creatur', and I must say that I think he has as good right to kill deer as any man on the Patent. It's his main support, and this is a free country, where a man is privileged to follow any calling he likes."

"According to that doctrine," said Jotham, "anybody may shoot a deer."

"This is the man's calling, I tell you," returned Kirby, "and the law was never made for such as he."

"The law was made for all," observed Hiram, who began to think that the danger was likely to fall to his own share, notwithstanding his management; "and the law is particular in noticing parjury."

"See here, Squire Doolittle," said the reckless woodchopper; "I don't care the value of a beetling for you and your parjury too. But as I have come so far, I'll go down and have a talk with the old man, and maybe we'll fry a steak of the deer together."

"Well, if you can get in peaceably, so much the better," said the magistrate. "To my notion, strife is very unpopular; I prefer, at all times, clever conduct to an ugly temper."

As the whole party moved at a great pace, they soon reached the hut, where Hiram thought it prudent to halt on the outside of the top of the fallen pine, which formed a chevaux-de-frise, to defend the approach to the fortress, on the side next the village. The delay was little relished by Kirby, who clapped his hands to his mouth, and gave a loud halloo that brought the dogs out of their kennel, and, almost at the same instant, the scantily-covered head of Natty from the door.

"Lie down, old fool," cried the hunter; "do you think there's more painters about you?"

"Ha! Leather-Stocking, I've an arrand with you," cried Kirby; "here's the good people of the State have been writing you a small letter, and they've hired me to ride post."

"What would you have with me, Billy Kirby?" said Natty, stepping across his threshold, and raising his hand over his eyes, to screen them from the rays of the setting sun, while he took a survey of his visitor. "I've no land to clear, and Heaven knows I would set out six trees afore I would cut down one.—Down, Hector, I say; into your kennel with ye."

"Would you, old boy?" roared Billy; "then so much the better for me. But I must do my arrand. Here's a letter for you, Leather-Stocking. If you can read it, it's all well, and if you can't, here's Squire Doolittle at hand, to let you know what it means. It seems you mistook the twentieth of July for the first of August, that's all."

By this time Natty had discovered the lank person of Hiram, drawn up under the cover of a high stump; and all that was complacent in his manner instantly gave way to marked distrust and dissatisfaction. He placed his head within the door of his hut, and said a few words in an undertone, when he again appeared, and continued:

"I've nothing for ye; so away, afore the Evil One tempts me to do you harm. I owe you no spite, Billy Kirby, and what for should you trouble an old man who has done you no harm?"

Kirby advanced through the top of the pine, to within a few feet of the hunter, where he seated himself on the end of a log, with great composure, and began to examine the nose of Hector, with whom he was familiar, from their frequently meeting in the woods, where he sometimes fed the dog from his own basket of provisions.

"You've outshot me, and I'm not ashamed to say it," said the wood-chopper; "but I don't owe you a grudge for that, Natty! though it seems that you've shot once too often, for the story goes that you've killed a buck."

"I've fired but twice to-day, and both times at the painters," returned the Leather-Stocking; "see, here are the scalps! I was just going in with them to the Judge's to ask the bounty."

While Natty was speaking, he tossed the ears to Kirby, who continued playing with them with a careless air, holding them to the dogs, and laughing at their movements when they scented the unusual game.

But Hiram, emboldened by the advance of the deputed constable, now ventured to approach also, and took up the discourse with the air of authority that became his commission. His first measure was to read the warrant aloud, taking care to give due emphasis to the most material parts, and concluding with the name of the Judge in very audible and distinct tones.

"Did Marmaduke Temple put his name to that bit of paper?" said Natty, shaking his head; "well, well, that man loves the new ways, and his betterments, and his lands, afore his own flesh and blood. But I won't mistrust the gal; she has an eye like a full-grown buck! poor thing, she didn't choose her father, and can't help it. I know but little of the law, Mr. Doolittle; what is to be done, now you've read your commission?"

"Oh! it's nothing but form, Natty," said Hiram, endeavoring to assume a friendly aspect. "Let's go in, and talk the thing over in reason; I dare to say that the money can be easily found, and I partly conclude, from what passed, that Judge Temple will pay it himself."

The old hunter had kept a keen eye on the movements of his three visitors, from the beginning, and had maintained his position, just without the threshold of the cabin, with a determined manner, that showed he was not to be easily driven from his post. When Hiram drew nigher, as if expecting his proposition would be accepted, Natty lifted his hand, and motioned for him to retreat.

"Haven't I told you more than once, not to tempt me?" he said. "I trouble no man; why can't the law leave me to myself? Go back—go back, and tell your Judge that he may keep his bounty; but I won't have his wasty ways brought into my hut."

This offer, however, instead of appeasing the curiosity of Hiram, seemed to inflame it the more; while Kirby cried:

"Well, that's fair, squire; he forgives the county his demand, and the county should forgive him the fine; it's what I call an even trade, and should be concluded on the spot. I like quick dealings, and what's fair 'twixt man and man."

"I demand entrance into this house," said Hiram, summoning all the dignity he could muster to his assistance, "in the name of the people; and by virtue of this war rant, and of my office, and with this peace officer."

"Stand back, stand back, squire, and don't tempt me," said the Leather-Stocking, motioning him to retire, with great earnestness.

"Stop us at your peril," continued Hiram. "Billy! Jotham! close up—I want testimony."

Hiram had mistaken the mild but determined air of Natty for submission, and had already put his foot on the threshold to enter, when



he was seized unexpectedly by his shoulders, and hurled over the little bank toward the lake, to the distance of twenty feet. The suddenness of the movement, and the unexpected display of strength on the part of Natty, created a momentary astonishment in his invaders, that silenced all noises; but at the next instant Billy Kirby gave vent to his mirth in peals of laughter, that he seemed to heave up from his very soul.

"Well done, old stub!" he shouted; "the squire knowed you better than I did. Come, come, here's a green spot; take it out like men, while Jotham and I see fair play."

"William Kirby, I order you to do your duty," cried Hiram, from under the bank; "seize that man; I order you to seize him in the name of the people."

But the Leather-Stocking now assumed a more threatening attitude; his rifle was in his hand, and its muzzle was directed toward the wood-chopper.

"Stand off, I bid ye," said Natty; "you know my aim, Billy Kirby; I don't crave your blood, but mine and your'n both shall turn this green grass red, afore you put foot into the hut."

While the affair appeared trifling, the wood-chopper seemed disposed to take sides with the weaker party; but, when the firearms were introduced, his manner very sensibly changed. He raised his large frame from the log, and, facing the hunter with an open front, he replied:

"I didn't come here as your enemy, Leather-Stocking; but I don't value the hollow piece of iron in your hand so much as a broken axe-helve; so, squire, say the word, and keep within the law, and we'll soon see who's the best main of the two."

But no magistrate was to be seen! The instant the rifle was produced Hiram and Jotham vanished; and when the wood-chopper bent his eyes about him in surprise at receiving no answer, he discovered their retreating figures moving toward the village at a rate that sufficiently indicated that they had not only calculated the velocity of a rifle-bullet, but also its probable range.

"You've scared the creatur's off," said Kirby, with great contempt expressed on his broad features; "but you are not going to scare me; so, Mr. Bumpo, down with your gun, or there'll be trouble 'twixt us." Natty dropped his rifle, and replied:

"I wish you no harm, Billy Kirby; but I leave it to yourself, whether an old man's hut is to be run down by such varmint. I won't deny the buck to you, Billy, and you may take the skin in, if you please, and show it as testimony. The bounty will pay the fine, and that ought to satisfy any man."

"Twill, old boy, 'twill," cried Kirby, every shade of displeasure vanishing from his open brow at the peace-offering; "throw out the hide, and that shall satisfy the law."

Natty entered the hut, and soon reappeared, bringing with him the desired testimonial; and the wood-chopper departed, as thoroughly reconciled to the hunter as if nothing had happened. As he paced along the margin of the lake he would burst into frequent fits of laughter, while he recollected the summons of Hiram: and, on the whole, he thought the affair a very capital joke.

Long before Billy' reached the village, however, the news of his danger, and of Natty's disrespect of the law, and of Hiram's discomfiture, were in circulation. A good deal was said about sending for the sheriff; some hints were given about calling out the posse comitatus to avenge the insulted laws; and many of the citizens were collected, deliberating how to proceed. The arrival of Billy with the skin, by removing all grounds for a search, changed the complexion of things materially. Nothing now remained but to collect the fine and assert the dignity of the people; all of which, it was unanimously agreed, could be done as well on the succeeding Monday as on Saturday night—a time kept sacred by large portion of the settlers. Accordingly, all further proceedings were suspended for six-and-thirty hours.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"And dar'st thou then  
To beard the lion in his den,  
The Douglas in his hall."  
—Marmion.

The commotion was just subsiding, and the inhabitants of the village had begun to disperse from the little groups that had formed, each retiring to his own home, and closing his door after him, with the grave air of a man who consulted public feeling in his exterior deportment, when Oliver Edwards, on his return from the dwelling of Mr. Grant, encountered the young lawyer, who is known to the reader as Mr. Lippet. There was very little similarity in the manners or opinions of the two; but as they both belonged to the more intelligent class of a very small community, they were, of course, known to each other, and as their meeting was at a point where silence would have been rudeness, the following conversation was the result of their interview:

"A fine evening, Mr. Edwards," commenced the lawyer, whose disinclination to the dialogue was, to say the least, very doubtful; "we want rain sadly; that's the worst of this climate of ours, it's either a drought or a deluge. It's likely you've been used to a more equal temperature?"

"I am a native of this State," returned Edwards, coldly.

"Well. I've often heard that point disputed; but it's so easy to get a man naturalized, that it's of little consequence where he was born. I wonder what course the Judge means to take in this business of Natty Bumppo!"

"Of Natty Bumppo!" echoed Edwards; "to what do you allude, sir?"

"Haven't you heard!" exclaimed the other, with a look of surprise, so naturally assumed as completely to deceive his auditor; "it may turn out an ugly business. It seems that the old man has been out in the hills, and has shot a buck this morning, and that, you know, is a criminal matter in the eyes of Judge Temple."

"Oh! he has, has he?" said Edwards, averting his face to conceal the color that collected in his sunburnt cheek. "Well, if that be all, he must even pay the fine."

"It's five pound currency," said the lawyer; "could Natty muster so much money at once?"

"Could he!" cried the youth. "I am not rich, Mr. Lippet; far from it—I am poor, and I have been hoarding my salary for a purpose that lies near my heart; but, be fore that old man should lie one hour in a jail, I would spend the last cent to prevent it. Besides, he has killed two panthers, and the bounty will discharge the fine many times over."

"Yes, yes," said the lawyer, rubbing his hands together, with an expression of pleasure that had no artifice about it; "we shall make it out; I see plainly we shall make it out."

"Make what out, sir? I must beg an explanation."

"Why, killing the buck is but a small matter compared to what took place this afternoon," continued Mr. Lippet, with a confidential and friendly air that won upon the youth, little as he liked the man. "It seems that a complaint was made of the fact, and a suspicion that there was venison in the hut was sworn to, all which is provided for in the statute, when Judge Temple granted the search warrant."

"A search-warrant!" echoed Edwards, in a voice of horror, and with a face that should have been again averted to conceal its paleness; "and how much did they discover? What did they see?"

"They saw old Bumppo's rifle; and that is a sight which will quiet most men's curiosity in the woods."

"Did they! did they!" shouted Edwards, bursting into a convulsive laugh; "so the old hero beat them back beat them back! did he?" The lawyer fastened his eyes in astonishment on the youth, but, as his wonder gave way to the thoughts that were commonly uppermost in his mind, he replied:

"It is no laughing matter, let me tell you, sir; the forty dollars of bounty and your six months of salary will be much reduced before you can get the matter fairly settled. Assaulting a magistrate in the execution of his duty, and menacing a constable with firearms at the same time, is a pretty serious affair, and is punishable with both fine and imprisonment."

"Imprisonment!" repeated Oliver; "imprison the Leather-Stocking! no, no, sir; it would bring the old man to his grave. They shall never imprison the Leather-Stocking."

"Well, Mr. Edwards," said Lippet, dropping all reserve from his manner, "you are called a curious man; but if you can tell me how a jury is to be prevented from finding a verdict of guilty, if this case comes fairly before them, and the proof is clear, I shall acknowledge that you know more law than I do, who have had a license in my pocket for three years."

By this time the reason of Edwards was getting the ascendancy of his feelings, and, as he began to see the real difficulties of the case, he listened more readily to the conversation of the lawyer. The ungovernable emotion that escaped the youth, in the first moments of his surprise, entirely passed away; and, although it was still evident that he continued to be much agitated by what he had heard, he succeeded in yielding forced attention to the advice which the other uttered.

Notwithstanding the confused state of his mind, Oliver soon discovered that most of the expedients of the lawyer were grounded in cunning, and plans that required a time to execute them that neither suited his disposition nor his necessities. After, however, giving Mr. Lippet to understand that he retained him in the event of a trial, an assurance that at once satisfied the lawyer, they parted, one taking his course with a deliberate tread in the direction of the little building that had a wooden sign over its door, with "Chester Lippet, Attorney-at-law," painted on it; and the other pacing over the ground with enormous strides toward the mansion-house. We

shall take leave of the attorney for the present, and direct the attention of the reader to the client.

When Edwards entered the hall, whose enormous doors were opened to the passage of the air of a mild evening, he found Benjamin engaged in some of his domestic avocations, and in a hurried voice inquired where Judge Temple was to be found.

"Why, the Judge has stepped into his office, with that master carpenter, Mister Doolittle; but Miss Lizzy is in that there parlor. I say, Master Oliver, we'd like to have had a bad job of that panther, or painter's work—some calls it one, and some calls it t'other—but I know little of the beast, seeing that it is not of British growth. I said as much as that it was in the hills the last winter for I heard it moaning on the lake shore one evening in the fall, when I was pulling down from the fishing-point in the skiff. Had the animal come into open water, where a man could see where and how to work his vessel, I would have engaged the thing myself; but looking aloft among the trees is all the same to me as standing on the deck of one ship, and looking at another vessel's tops. I never can tell one rope from another—"

"Well, well," interrupted Edwards; "I must see Miss Temple."

"And you shall see her, sir," said the steward; "she's in this here room. Lord, Master Edwards, what a loss she'd have been to the Judge! Dam'me if I know where he would have gotten such another daughter; that is, full grown, d'ye see. I say, sir, this Master Bumpo is a worthy man, and seems to have a handy way with him, with firearms and boat-hooks. I'm his friend, Master Oliver, and he and you may both set me down as the same."

"We may want your friendship, my worthy fellow," cried Edwards, squeezing his hand convulsively; "we may want your friendship, in which case you shall know it."

Without waiting to hear the earnest reply that Benjamin meditated, the youth extricated himself from the vigorous grasp of the steward, and entered the parlor.

Elizabeth was alone, and still reclining on the sofa, where we last left her. A hand, which exceeded all that the ingenuity of art could model, in shape and color; veiled her eyes; and the maiden was sitting as if in deep communion with herself. Struck by the attitude and loveliness of the form that met his eye, the young man checked his impatience, and approached her with respect and caution.

"Miss Temple—Miss Temple," he said, "I hope I do not intrude; but I am anxious for an interview, if it be only for a moment."

Elizabeth raised her face, and exhibited her dark eyes swimming in moisture.

"Is it you, Edwards?" she said, with a sweetness in her voice, and a softness in her air, that she often used to her father, but which, from its novelty to himself, thrilled on every nerve of the youth; "how left you our poor Louisa?"

"She is with her father, happy and grateful," said Oliver, "I never witnessed more feeling than she manifested, when I ventured to express my pleasure at her escape. Miss Temple, when I first heard of your horrid situation, my feelings were too powerful for utterance; and I did not properly find my tongue, until the walk to Mr. Grant's had given me time to collect myself. I believe—I do believe, I acquitted myself better there, for Miss Grant even wept at my silly speeches." For a moment Elizabeth did not reply, but again veiled her eyes with her hand. The feeling that caused the action, however, soon passed away, and, raising her face again to his gaze, she continued with a smile:

"Your friend, the Leather-Stocking, has now become my friend, Edwards; I have been thinking how I can best serve him; perhaps you, who know his habits and his wants so well, can tell me——"

"I can," cried the youth, with an impetuosity that startled his companion. "I can, and may Heaven reward you for the wish, Natty has been so imprudent as to for get the law, and has this day killed a deer. Nay, I believe I must share in the crime and the penalty, for I was an accomplice throughout. A complaint has been made to your father, and he has granted a search——"

"I know it all," interrupted Elizabeth; "I know it all. The forms of the law must be complied with, however; the search must be made, the deer found, and the penalty paid. But I must retort your own question. Have you lived so long in our family not to know us? Look at me, Oliver Edwards. Do I appear like one who would permit the man that has just saved her life to linger in a jail for so small a sum as this fine? No, no, sir; my father is a judge, but he is a man and a Christian. It is all under stood, and no harm shall follow."

"What a load of apprehension do your declarations remove!" exclaimed Edwards: "He shall not be disturbed again! your father will protect him! I have assurance, Miss Temple, that he will, and I must believe it."

"You may have his own, Mr. Edwards," returned Elizabeth, "for here he comes to make it."

But the appearance of Marmaduke, who entered the apartment, contradicted the flattering anticipations of his daughter. His brow was contracted, and his manner disturbed. Neither Elizabeth nor the youth spoke; but the Judge was allowed to pace once or twice across the room without interruption, when he cried:

"Our plans are defeated, girl; the obstinacy of the Leather-Stocking has brought down the indignation of the law on his head, and it is now out of my power to avert it."

"How? in what manner?" cried Elizabeth; "the fine is nothing surely——"

"I did not—I could not anticipate that an old, a friendless man like him, would dare to oppose the officers of justice," interrupted the Judge, "I supposed that he would submit to the search, when the fine could have been paid, and the law would have been appeased; but now he will have to meet its rigor."

"And what must the punishment be, sir?" asked Edwards, struggling to speak with firmness.

Marmaduke turned quickly to the spot where the youth had withdrawn, and exclaimed:

"You here! I did not observe you. I know not what it will be, sir; it is not usual for a judge to decide until he has heard the testimony, and the jury have convicted. Of one thing, however, you may be assured, Mr. Edwards; it shall be whatever the law demands, notwithstanding any momentary weakness I may have exhibited, because the luckless man has been of such eminent service to my daughter."

"No one, I believe, doubts the sense of justice which Judge Temple entertains!" returned Edwards bitterly.

"But let us converse calmly, sir. Will not the years, the habits, nay, the ignorance of my old friend, avail him any thing against this charge?"

"Ought they? They may extenuate, but can they acquit? Would any society be tolerable, young man, where the ministers of justice are to be opposed by men armed with rifles? Is it for this that I have tamed the wilder ness?"

"Had you tamed the beasts that so lately threatened the life of Miss Temple, sir, your arguments would apply better."

"Edwards!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

"Peace, my child," interrupted the father; "the youth is unjust; but I have not given him cause. I overlook thy remark, Oliver, for I know thee to be the friend of Natty, and zeal in his behalf has overcome thy discretion."

"Yes, he is my friend," cried Edwards, "and I glory in the title. He is simple, unlettered, even ignorant; prejudiced, perhaps, though I feel that his opinion of the world is too true; but he has a heart, Judge Temple, that would atone for a thousand faults; he knows his friends, and never deserts them, even if it be his dog."

"This is a good character, Mr. Edwards," returned Marmaduke, mildly; "but I have never been so fortunate as to secure his esteem, for to me he has been uniformly repulsive; yet I have endured it, as an old man's whim. However, when he appears before me, as his judge, he shall find that his former conduct shall not aggravate, any more than his recent services shall extenuate, his crime."

"Crime!" echoed Edwards: "is it a crime to drive a prying miscreant from his door? Crime! Oh, no, sir; if there be a criminal involved in this affair, it is not he."

"And who may it be, sir?" asked Judge Temple, facing the agitated youth, his features settled to their usual composure.

This appeal was more than the young man could bear. Hitherto he had been deeply agitated by his emotions; but now the volcano burst its boundaries.

"Who! and this to me!" he cried; "ask your own conscience, Judge Temple. Walk to that door, sir, and look out upon the valley, that placid lake, and those dusky mountains, and say to your own heart, if heart you have, whence came these riches, this vale, those hills, and why am I their owner? I should think, sir, that the appearance of Mohegan and the Leather-Stocking, stalking through the country, impoverished and forlorn, would wither your sight."

Marmaduke heard this burst of passion, at first, with deep amazement; but when the youth had ended, he beckoned to his impatient daughter for silence, and replied:

"Oliver Edwards, thou forgettest in whose presence thou standest. I have heard, young man, that thou claimest descent from the native owners of the soil; but surely thy education has been given thee to no effect, if it has not taught thee the validity of the claims that have transferred the title to the whites. These lands are mine by the very grants of thy ancestry, if thou art so descended; and I appeal to Heaven for a testimony of the uses I have put them to. After this language, we must separate. I have too long sheltered thee in my dwelling; but the time has arrived when thou must quit it. Come to my office, and I will discharge the debt I owe thee. Neither shall thy present intemperate language mar thy future fortunes, if thou wilt hearken to the advice of one who is by many years thy senior."

The ungovernable feeling that caused the violence of the youth had passed away, and he stood gazing after the retiring figure of Marmaduke, with a vacancy in his eye that denoted the absence of his mind. At length he recollected himself, and, turning his head slowly around the apartment, he beheld Elizabeth, still seated on the sofa, but with her head dropped on her bosom, and her face again concealed by her hands.

"Miss Temple," he said—all violence had left his manner—"Miss Temple—I have forgotten myself—forgotten you. You have heard what your father has decreed, and this night I leave here. With you, at least, I would part in amity."

Elizabeth slowly raised her face, across which a momentary expression of sadness stole; but as she left her seat, her dark eyes lighted with their usual fire, her cheek flushed to burning, and her whole air seemed to belong to another nature.

"I forgive you, Edwards, and my father will forgive you," she said, when she reached the door. "You do not know us, but the time may come when your opinions shall change—"

"Of you! never!" interrupted the youth; "I—"

"I would speak, sir, and not listen. There is something in this affair that I do not comprehend; but tell the Leather-Stocking he has friends as well as judges in us. Do not let the old man experience unnecessary uneasiness at this rupture. It is impossible that you could increase his claims here; neither shall they be diminished by any thing you have said. Mr. Edwards, I wish you happiness, and warmer friends."

The youth would have spoken, but she vanished from the door so rapidly, that when he reached the hall her form was nowhere to be seen. He paused a moment, in stupor, and then, rushing from the house, instead of following Marmaduke in his "office," he took his way directly for the cabin of the hunters.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"Who measured earth, described the starry spheres,  
And traced the long records of lunar years."  
—Pope.

Richard did not return from the exercise of his official duties until late in the evening of the following day. It had been one portion of his business to superintend the arrest of part of a gang of counterfeiters, that had, even at that early period, buried themselves in the woods, to manufacture their base coin, which they afterward circulated from one end of the Union to the other. The expedition had been completely successful, and about midnight the sheriff entered the village, at the head of a posse of deputies and constables, in the centre of whom rode, pinioned, four of the malefactors. At the gate of the mansion-house they separated, Mr. Jones directing his assistants to proceed with their charge to the county jail, while he pursued his own way up the gravel walk, with the kind of self-satisfaction that a man of his organization would feel, who had really for once done a very clever thing.

"Holla! Aggy!" shouted the sheriff, when he reached the door; "where are you, you black dog? will you keep me here in the dark all night? Holla! Aggy! Brave! Brave! hoy, hoy—where have you got to, Brave? Off his watch! Everybody is asleep but myself! Poor I must keep my eyes open, that others may sleep in safety. Brave! Brave! Well, I will say this for the dog, lazy as he's grown, that it is the first time I ever knew him to let any one come to the door after dark, without having a smell to know whether it was an honest man or not. He could tell by his nose, almost as well as I could myself by looking at them. Holla! you Agamemnon! where are you? Oh! here comes the dog at last."

By this time the sheriff had dismounted, and observed a form, which he supposed to be that of Brave, slowly creeping out of the kennel; when, to his astonishment, it reared itself on two legs instead of four, and he was able to distinguish, by the starlight, the curly head and dark visage of the negro.

"Ha! what the devil are you doing there, you black rascal?" he cried. "Is it not hot enough for your Guinea blood in the house this warm night, but you must drive out the poor dog, and sleep in his straw?"

By this time the boy was quite awake, and, with a blubbering whine, he attempted to reply to his master.

"Oh! masser Richard! masser Richard! such a ting! such a ting! I nebber tink a could 'appen! neber tink he die! Oh, Lor-a-gor! ain't bury—keep 'em till masser Richard get back—got a grabe dug—" Here the feelings of the negro completely got the mastery, and, instead of making any intelligible explanation of the causes of his grief, he blubbered aloud.

"Eh! what! buried! grave! dead!" exclaimed Richard, with a tremor in his voice; "nothing serious? Nothing has happened to Benjamin, I hope? I know he has been bilious, but I gave him—"

"Oh, worser 'an dat! worser 'an dat!" sobbed the negro. "Oh! de Lor! Miss 'Lizzy an' Miss Grant—walk—mountain—poor Bravy '—kill a lady—painter—Oh, Lor, Lor!—Natty Bumpo—tare he troat open—come a see, masser Richard—here he be—here he be."

As all this was perfectly inexplicable to the sheriff, he was very glad to wait patiently until the black brought a lantern from the kitchen, when he followed Aggy to the kennel, where he beheld poor Brave, indeed, lying in his blood, stiff and cold, but decently covered with the great coat of the negro. He was on the point of demanding an explanation; but the grief of the black, who had fallen asleep on his voluntary watch, having burst out afresh on his waking, utterly disqualified the lad from giving one. Luckily, at this moment the principal door of the house opened, and the coarse features of Benjamin were thrust over the threshold, with a candle elevated above them, shedding its dim rays around in such a manner as to exhibit the lights and shadows of his countenance. Richard threw his bridle to the black, and, bidding him look to the horse, he entered the hall. "What is the meaning of the dead dog?" he cried.

"Where is Miss Temple?"

Benjamin made one of his square gestures, with the thumb of his left hand pointing over his right shoulder, as he answered:

"Turned in."

"Judge Temple—where is he?"

"In his berth."

"But explain; why is Brave dead? and what is the cause of Aggy's grief?"

"Why, it's all down, squire," said Benjamin, pointing to a slate that lay on the table, by the side of a mug of toddy, a short pipe in which the tobacco was yet burning, and a prayer-book.

Among the other pursuits of Richard, he had a passion to keep a register of all passing events; and his diary, which was written in the manner of a journal, or log, book, embraced not only such circumstances as affected himself, but observations on the weather, and all the occurrences of the family, and frequently of the village. Since his appointment to the office of sheriff and his consequent absences from home, he had employed Benjamin to make memoranda on a slate, of whatever might be thought worth remembering, which, on his return, were regularly transferred to the journal with proper notations of the time, manner, and other little particulars. There was, to be sure, one material objection to the clerkship of Benjamin, which the ingenuity of no one but Richard could have overcome. The steward read nothing but his prayer-book, and that only in particular parts, and by the aid of a good deal of spelling, and some misnomers; but he could not form a single letter with a pen. This would have been an insuperable bar to journalizing with most men; but Richard invented a kind of hieroglyphical character, which was intended to note all the ordinary occurrences of a day, such as how the wind blew, whether the sun shone, or whether it rained, the hours, etc.; and for the extraordinary, after giving certain elementary lectures on the subject, the sheriff was obliged to trust to the ingenuity of the major-domo. The reader will at once perceive, that it was

to this chronicle that Benjamin pointed, instead of directly answering the sheriff's interrogatory.

When Mr. Jones had drunk a glass of toddy, he brought forth from its secret place his proper journal, and, seating himself by the table, he prepared to transfer the contents of the slate to the paper, at the same time that he appeased his curiosity. Benjamin laid one hand on the back of the sheriff's chair, in a familiar manner, while he kept the other at liberty to make use of a forefinger, that was bent like some of his own characters, as an index to point out his meaning.

The first thing referred to by the sheriff was the diagram of a compass, cut in one corner of the slate for permanent use. The cardinal points were plainly marked on it, and all the usual divisions were indicated in such a manner that no man who had ever steered a ship could mistake them.

"Oh!" said the sheriff, seating himself down comfortably in his chair, "you'd the wind southeast, I see, all last night I thought it would have blown up rain."

"Devil the drop, sir," said Benjamin; "I believe that the scuttle-butt up aloft is emptied, for there hasn't so much water fell in the country for the last three weeks as would float Indian John's canoe, and that draws just one inch nothing, light."

"Well but didn't the wind change here this morning? there was a change where I was."

"To be sure it did, squire; and haven't I logged it as a shift of wind?"

"I don't see where, Benjamin—"

"Don't see!" interrupted the steward, a little crustily; "ain't there a mark agin' east-and-by-nothe-half-nothe, with summat like a rising sun at the end of it, to show 'twas in the morning watch?"

"Yes, yes, that is very legible; but where is the change noted?"

"Where! why doesn't it see this here tea-kettle, with a mark run from the spout straight, or mayhap a little crooked or so, into west-and-by-southe-half-southe? now I call this a shift of wind, squire. Well, do you see this here boar's head that you made for me, alongside of the compass—"

"Ay, ay—Boreas—I see. Why, you've drawn lines from its mouth, extending from one of your marks to the other."

"It's no fault of mine, Squire Dickens; 'tis your d——d climate. The wind has been at all them there marks this very day, and that's all round the compass, except a little matter of an Irishman's hurricane at meridium, which you'll find marked right up and down. Now, I've known a sow-wester blow for three weeks, in the channel, with a clean drizzle, in which you might wash your face and hands without the trouble of hauling in water from alongside."

"Very well, Benjamin," said the sheriff, writing in his journal; "I believe I have caught the idea. Oh! here's a cloud over the rising sun—so you had it hazy in the morning?"

"Ay, ay, sir," said Benjamin.

"Ah it's Sunday, and here are the marks for the length of the sermon—one, two, three, four—what! did Mr. Grant preach forty minutes?"

"Ay, summat like it; it was a good half-hour by my own glass, and then there was the time lost in turning it, and some little allowance for leeway in not being over-smart about it."

"Benjamin, this is as long as a Presbyterian; you never could have been ten minutes in turning the glass!"

"Why, do you see, Squire, the parson was very solemn, and I just closed my eyes in order to think the better with myself, just the same as you'd put in the dead-lights to make all snug, and when I opened them agin I found the congregation were getting under way for home, so I calculated the ten minutes would cover the leeway after the glass was out. It was only some such matter as a cat's nap."

"Oh, ho! Master Benjamin, you were asleep, were you? but I'll set down no such slander against an orthodox divine." Richard wrote twenty-nine minutes in his journal, and continued: "Why, what's this you've got opposite ten o'clock A.M.? A full moon! had you a moon visible by day? I have heard of such portents before now, but—eh! what's this alongside of it? an hour-glass?"

"That!" said Benjamin, looking coolly over the sheriff's shoulder, and rolling the tobacco about in his mouth with a jocular air; "why, that's a small matter of my own. It's no moon, squire, but only Betty Hollister's face; for, dye see, sir, hearing all the same as if she had got up a new cargo of Jamaiky from the river, I called in as I was going to the church this morning—ten A.M. was it?—just the time—and tried a glass; and so I logged it, to put me in mind of calling to pay her like an honest man."

"That was it, was it?" said the sheriff, with some displeasure at this innovation on his memoranda; "and could you not make a better glass than this? it looks like a death's-head and an hour-glass."

"Why, as I liked the stuff, squire," returned the steward, "I turned in, homeward bound, and took t'other glass, which I set down at the bottom of the first, and that gives the thing the shape it has. But as I was there again to-night, and paid for the three at once, your honor may as well run the sponge over the whole business."

"I will buy you a slate for your own affairs, Benjamin," said the sheriff; "I don't like to have the journal marked over in this manner."

"You needn't—you needn't, squire; for, seeing that I was likely to trade often with the woman while this barrel lasted. I've opened a fair account with Betty, and she keeps her marks on the back of her bar-door, and I keeps the tally on this here bit of a stick." As Benjamin concluded he produced a piece of wood, on which five very large, honest notches were apparent. The sheriff cast his eyes on this new ledger for a moment, and continued:

"What have we here! Saturday, two P.M.—Why here's a whole family piece! two wine-glasses upside-down!"

"That's two women; the one this a-way is Miss 'Lizzy, and t'other is the parson's young'un."

"Cousin Bess and Miss Grant!" exclaimed the sheriff, in amazement; "what have they to do with my journal?"

"They'd enough to do to get out of the jaws of that there painter or panther," said the immovable steward. "This here thingumy,

squire, that maybe looks summat like a rat, is the beast, d'ye see; and this here t'other thing, keel uppermost, is poor old Brave, who died nobly, all the same as an admiral fighting for his king and country; and that there—"

"Scarecrow," interrupted Richard.

"Ay, mayhap it do look a little wild or so," continued the steward; "but to my judgment, squire, it's the best image I've made, seeing it's most like the man himself; well, that's Natty Bumppo, who shot this here painter, that killed that there dog, who would have eaten or done worse to them here young ladies."

"And what the devil does all this mean?" cried Richard, impatiently.

"Mean!" echoed Benjamin; "it is as true as the Boadishy's log book—" He was interrupted by the sheriff, who put a few direct questions to him, that obtained more intelligible answers, by which means he became possessed of a tolerably correct idea of the truth, When the wonder, and we must do Richard the justice to say, the feelings also, that were created by this narrative, had in some degree subsided, the sheriff turned his eyes again on his journal, where more inexplicable hieroglyphics met his view.

"What have we here?" he cried; "two men boxing! Has there been a breach of the peace? Ah, that's the way, the moment my back is turned—."

"That's the Judge and young Master Edwards," interrupted the steward, very cavalierly.

"How! 'Duke fighting with Oliver! what the devil has got into you all? More things have happened within the last thirty-six hours than in the preceding six months."

"Yes, it's so indeed, squire," returned the steward, "I've known a smart chase, and a fight at the tail of it, where less has been logged than I've got on that there slate. Howsomever, they didn't come to facers, only passed a little jaw fore and aft."

"Explain! explain!" cried Richard; "it was about the mines, ha! Ay, ay, I see it, I see it; here is a man with a pick on his shoulder. So you heard it all, Benjamin?"

"Why, yes, it was about their minds, I believe, squire," returned the steward; "and, by what I can learn, they spoke them pretty plainly to one another. Indeed, I may say that I overheard a small matter of it myself, seeing that the windows was open, and I hard by. But this here is no pick, but an anchor on a man's shoulder; and here's the other fluke down his back, maybe a little too close, which signifies that the lad has got under way and left his moorings."

"Has Edwards left the house?"

"He has."

Richard pursued this advantage; and, after a long and close examination, he succeeded in getting out of Benjamin all that he knew, not only concerning the misunderstanding, but of the attempt to search the hut, and Hiram's discomfiture. The sheriff was no sooner possessed of these facts, which Benjamin related with all possible tenderness to the Leather-Stocking, than, snatching up his hat, and bidding the astonished steward secure the doors and go to his bed, he left the house.

For at least five minutes, after Richard disappeared, Benjamin stood with his arms akimbo, and his eyes fastened on the door; when, having collected his astonished faculties, he prepared to execute the orders he had received.

It has been already said that the "court of common pleas and general sessions of the peace," or, as it is commonly called, the "county court," over which Judge Temple presided, held one of its stated sessions on the following morning. The attendants of Richard were officers who had come to the village, as much to discharge their usual duties at this court, as to escort the prisoners and the sheriff knew their habits too well, not to feel confident that he should find most, if not all of them, in the public room of the jail, discussing the qualities of the keeper's liquors. Accordingly he held his way through the silent streets of the village, directly to the small and insecure building that contained all the unfortunate debt ors and some of the criminals of the county, and where justice was administered to such unwary applicants as were so silly as to throw away two dollars in order to obtain one from their neighbors. The arrival of four malefactors in the custody of a dozen officers was an event, at that day, in Templeton; and, when the sheriff reached the jail, he found every indication that his subordinates intended to make a night of it.

The nod of the sheriff brought two of his deputies to the door, who in their turn drew off six or seven of the constables. With this force Richard led the way through the village, toward the bank of the lake, undisturbed by any noise, except the barking of one or two curs, who were alarmed by the measured tread of the party, and by the low murmurs that ran through their own numbers, as a few cautious questions and answers were exchanged, relative to the object of their expedition. When they had crossed the little bridge of hewn logs that was thrown over the Susquehanna, they left the highway, and struck into that field which had been the scene of the victory over the pigeons. From this they followed their leader into the low bushes of pines and chestnuts which had sprung up along the shores of the lake, where the plough had not succeeded the fall of the trees, and soon entered the forest itself. Here Richard paused and collected his troop around him.

"I have required your assistance, my friends," he cried, in a low voice, "in order to arrest Nathaniel Bumppo, commonly called the Leather-Stocking. He has assaulted a magistrate, and resisted the execution of a search-war rant, by threatening the life of a constable with his rifle. In short, my friends, he has set an example of rebellion to the laws, and has become a kind of outlaw. He is suspected of other misdemeanors and offences against private rights; and I have this night taken on myself, by the virtue of my office as sheriff, to arrest the said Bumppo, and bring him to the county jail, that he may be present and forthcoming to answer to these heavy charges before the court to-morrow morning. In executing this duty, friends and fellow-citizens, you are to use courage and discretion; courage, that you may not be daunted by any lawless attempt that this man may make with his rifle and his dogs to oppose you; and discretion, which here means caution and prudence, that he may not escape from this sudden attack—and for other good reasons that I need not mention. You will form yourselves in a complete circle around his hut, and at the word 'advance,' called aloud by me, you will rush forward and, without giving the criminal time for deliberation, enter his dwelling by force, and make him your prisoner. Spread yourselves for this purpose, while I shall descend to the shore with a deputy, to take charge of that point; and all communications must

be made directly to me, under the bank in front of the hut, where I shall station myself and remain, in order to receive them.”

This speech, which Richard had been studying during his walk, had the effect that all similar performances produce, of bringing the dangers of the expedition immediately before the eyes of his forces. The men divided, some plunging deeper into the forest, in order to gain their stations without giving an alarm, and others continuing to advance, at a gait that would allow the whole party to go in order; but all devising the best plan to repulse the attack of a dog, or to escape a rifle-bullet. It was a moment of dread expectation and interest.

When the sheriff thought time enough had elapsed for the different divisions of his force to arrive at their stations, he raised his voice in the silence of the forest, and shouted the watchword. The sounds played among the arched branches of the trees in hollow cadences; but when the last sinking tone was lost on the ear, in place of the expected howls of the dogs, no other noises were returned but the crackling of torn branches and dried sticks, as they yielded before the advancing steps of the officers. Even this soon ceased, as if by a common consent, when the curiosity and impatience of the sheriff getting the complete ascendancy over discretion, he rushed up the bank, and in a moment stood on the little piece of cleared ground in front of the spot where Natty had so long lived, To his amazement, in place of the hut he saw only its smouldering ruins.

The party gradually drew together about the heap of ashes and the ends of smoking logs; while a dim flame in the centre of the ruin, which still found fuel to feed its lingering life, threw its pale light, flickering with the passing currents of the air, around the circle—now showing a face with eyes fixed in astonishment, and then glancing to another countenance, leaving the former shaded in the obscurity of night. Not a voice was raised in inquiry, nor an exclamation made in astonishment. The transition from excitement to disappointment was too powerful for Speech; and even Richard lost the use of an organ that was seldom known to fail him.

The whole group were yet in the fullness of their surprise, when a tall form stalked from the gloom into the circle, treading down the hot ashes and dying embers with callous feet; and, standing over the light, lifted his cap, and exposed the bare head and weather-beaten features of the Leather-Stocking. For a moment he gazed at the dusky figures who surrounded him, more in sorrow than in anger before he spoke.

“What would ye with an old and helpless man?” he said, “You’ve driven God’s creatur’s from the wilder ness, where His providence had put them for His own pleasure; and you’ve brought in the troubles and diviltries of the law, where no man was ever known to disturb another. You have driven me, that have lived forty long years of my appointed time in this very spot, from my home and the shelter of my head, lest you should put your wicked feet and wasty ways in my cabin. You’ve driven me to burn these logs, under which I’ve eaten and drunk—the first of Heaven’s gifts, and the other of the pure springs—for the half of a hundred years; and to mourn the ashes under my feet, as a man would weep and mourn for the children of his body. You’ve rankled the heart of an old man, that has never harmed you or your’n, with bitter feelings toward his kind, at a time when his thoughts should be on a better world; and you’ve driven him to wish that the beasts of the forest, who never feast on the blood of their own families, was his kindred and race; and now, when he has come to see the last brand of his hut, before it is incited into ashes, you follow him up, at midnight, like hungry hounds on the track of a worn-out and dying deer. What more would ye have? for I am here—one too many. I come to mourn, not to fight; and, if it is God’s pleasure, work your will on me.”

When the old man ended he stood, with the light glimmering around his thinly covered head, looking earnestly at the group, which receded from the pile with an involuntary movement, without the reach of the quivering rays, leaving a free passage for his retreat into the bushes, where pursuit in the dark would have been fruit less. Natty seemed not to regard this advantage, but stood facing each individual in the circle in succession, as if to see who would be the first to arrest him. After a pause of a few moments Richard began to rally his confused faculties, and, advancing, apologized for his duty, and made him his prisoner. The party flow collected, and, preceded by the sheriff, with Natty in their centre, they took their way toward the village.

During the walk, divers questions were put to the prisoner concerning his reasons for burning the hut, and whither Mohegan had retreated; but to all of them he observed a profound silence, until, fatigued with their previous duties, and the lateness of the hour, the sheriff and his followers reached the village, and dispersed to their several places of rest, after turning the key of a jail on the aged and apparently friendless Leather-Stocking.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Fetch here the stocks, ho!  
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend bragget,  
We'll teach you."  
—Lear.

The long days and early sun of July allowed time for a gathering of the interested, before the little bell of the academy announced that the appointed hour had arrived for administering right to the wronged, and punishment to the guilty. Ever since the dawn of day, the highways and woodpaths that, issuing from the forests, and winding among the sides of the mountains, centred in Templeton, had been thronged with equestrians and footmen, bound to the haven of justice. There was to be seen a well-clad yeoman, mounted on a sleek, switch-tailed steed, rambling along the highway, with his red face elevated in a manner that said, "I have paid for my land, and fear no man;" while his bosom was swelling with the pride of being one of the grand inquest for the county. At his side rode a companion, his equal in independence of feeling, perhaps, but his inferior in thrift, as in property and consideration. This was a professed dealer in lawsuits—a man whose name appeared in every calendar—whose substance, gained in the multifarious expedients of a settler's changeable habits, was wasted in feeding the harpies of the courts. He was endeavoring to impress the mind of the grand juror with the merits of a cause now at issue. Along with these was a pedestrian, who, having thrown a rifle frock over his shirt, and placed his best wool hat above his sunburnt visage, had issued from his retreat in the woods by a footpath, and was striving to keep company with the others, on his way to hear and to decide the disputes of his neighbors, as a petit juror. Fifty similar little knots of countrymen might have been seen, on that morning, journeying toward the shire-town on the same errand.

By ten o'clock the streets of the village were filled with busy faces; some talking of their private concerns, some listening to a popular expounder of political creeds; and others gaping in at the open stores, admiring the finery, or examining scythes, axes, and such other manufactures as attracted their curiosity or excited their admiration. A few women were in the crowd, most carrying infants, and followed, at a lounging, listless gait, by their rustic lords and masters. There was one young couple, in whom connubial love was yet fresh, walking at a respectful distance from each other; while the swain directed the timid steps of his bride, by a gallant offering of a thumb.

At the first stroke of the bell, Richard issued from the door of the "Bold Dragoon," flourishing a sheathed sword, that he was fond of saying his ancestors had carried in one of Cromwell's victories, and crying, in an authoritative tone, to "clear the way for the court." The order was obeyed promptly, though not servilely, the members of the crowd nodding familiarly to the members of the procession as it passed. A party of constables with their staves followed the sheriff, preceding Marmaduke and four plain, grave-looking yeomen, who were his associates on the bench. There was nothing to distinguish these Subordinate judges from the better part of the spectators, except gravity, which they affected a little more than common, and that one of their number was attired in an old-fashioned military coat, with skirts that reached no lower than the middle of his thighs, and bearing two little silver epaulets, not half so big as a modern pair of shoulder-knots. This gentleman was a colonel of the militia, in attendance on a court-martial, who found leisure to steal a moment from his military to attend to his civil jurisdiction; but this incongruity excited neither notice nor comment. Three or four clean-shaved lawyers followed, as meek as if they were lambs going to the slaughter. One or two of their number had contrived to obtain an air of scholastic gravity by wearing spectacles. The rear was brought up by another posse of constables, and the mob followed the whole into the room where the court held its sitting.

The edifice was composed of a basement of squared logs, perforated here and there with small grated windows, through which a few wistful faces were gazing at the crowd without. Among the captives were the guilty, downcast countenances of the counterfeiter, and the simple but honest features of the Leather-Stocking. The dungeons were to be distinguished, externally, from the debtors' apartments only by the size of the apertures, the thickness of the grates, and by the heads of the spikes that were driven into the logs as a protection against the illegal use of edge-tools. The upper story was of frame work, regularly covered with boards, and contained one room decently fitted up for the purpose of justice. A bench, raised on a narrow platform to the height of a man above the floor, and protected in front by a light railing, ran along one of its sides. In the centre was a seat, furnished with rude arms, that was always filled by the presiding judge. In front, on a level with the floor of the room, was a large table covered with green baize, and surrounded by benches; and at either of its ends were rows of seats, rising one over the other, for jury-boxes. Each of these divisions was surrounded by a railing. The remainder of the room was an open square, appropriated to the spectators.

When the judges were seated, the lawyers had taken possession of the table, and the noise of moving feet had ceased in the area, the proclamations were made in the usual form, the jurors were sworn, the charge was given, and the court proceeded to hear the business before them.

We shall not detain the reader with a description of the captious discussions that occupied the court for the first two hours, Judge Temple had impressed on the jury, in his charge, the necessity for dispatch on their part, recommending to their notice, from motives of humanity, the prisoners in the jail as the first objects of their attention. Accordingly, after the period we have mentioned had elapsed, the cry of the officer to "clear the way for the grand jury," announced the entrance of that body. The usual forms were observed, when the foreman handed up to the bench two bills, on both of which the Judge observed, at the first glance of his eye, the name of Nathaniel Bumppo. It was a leisure moment with the court; some low whispering passed between the bench and the sheriff, who gave a signal to his officers, and in a very few minutes the silence that prevailed was interrupted by a general movement in the outer crowd, when presently the Leather-Stocking made his appearance, ushered into the criminal's bar under the custody of two constables. The hum ceased, the people closed into the open space again, and the silence soon became so deep that the hard breathing of the prisoner was audible.

Natty was dressed in his buckskin garments, without his coat, in place of which he wore only a shirt of coarse linen-chemise, fastened at his throat by the sinew of a deer, leaving his red neck and weather-beaten face exposed and bare. It was the first time that he had ever crossed the threshold of a court of justice, and curiosity seemed to be strongly blended with his personal feelings. He raised his eyes to the bench, thence to the jury-boxes, the bar, and the crowd without, meeting everywhere looks fastened on himself. After surveying his own person, as searching the cause of this unusual attraction, he once more turned his face around the assemblage, and opened his mouth in one of his silent and remarkable laughs.

"Prisoner, remove your cap," said Judge Temple.

The order was either unheard or unheeded.

"Nathaniel Bumppo, be uncovered," repeated the Judge.

Natty started at the sound of his name, and, raising his face earnestly toward the bench, he said:

"Anan!"

Mr. Lippert arose from his seat at the table, and whispered in the ear of the prisoner; when Natty gave him a nod of assent, and took the deer-skin covering from his head.

"Mr. District Attorney," said the Judge, "the prisoner is ready; we wait for the indictment."

The duties of public prosecutor were discharged by Dirck Van der School, who adjusted his spectacles, cast a cautious look around him at his brethren of the bar, which he ended by throwing his head aside so as to catch one glance over the glasses, when he proceeded to read the bill aloud. It was the usual charge for an assault and battery on the person of Hiram Doolittle, and was couched in the ancient language of such instruments, especial care having been taken by the scribe not to omit the name of a single offensive weapon known to the law. When he had done, Mr. Van der School removed his spectacles, which he closed and placed in his pocket, seemingly for the pleasure of again opening and replacing them on his nose. After this evolution was repeated once or twice, he handed the bill over to Mr. Lippert, with a cavalier air, that said as much as "Pick a hole in that if you can."

Natty listened to the charge with great attention, leaning forward toward the reader with an earnestness that denoted his interest; and, when it was ended, he raised his tall body to the utmost, and drew a long sigh. All eyes were turned to the prisoner, whose voice was vainly expected to break the stillness of the room.

"You have heard the presentment that the grand jury have made, Nathaniel Bumppo," said the Judge; "what do you plead to the charge?"

The old man drooped his head for a moment in a reflecting attitude, and then, raising it, he laughed before he answered:

"That I handled the man a little rough or so, is not to be denied; but that there was occasion to make use of all the things that the gentleman has spoken of is downright untrue. I am not much of a wrestler, seeing that I'm getting old; but I was out among the Scotch-Irishers—let me see—it must have been as long ago as the first year of the old war—"

"Mr. Lippert, if you are retained for the prisoner," interrupted Judge Temple, "instruct your client how to plead; if not, the court will assign him counsel."

Aroused from studying the indictment by this appeal, the attorney got up, and after a short dialogue with the hunter in a low voice, he informed the court that they were ready to proceed.

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?" said the Judge.

"I may say not guilty, with a clean conscience," returned Natty; "for there's no guilt in doing what's right; and I'd rather died on the spot, than had him put foot in the hut at that moment."

Richard started at this declaration and bent his eyes significantly on Hiram, who returned the look with a slight movement of his eyebrows.

"Proceed to open the cause, Mr. District Attorney," continued the Judge. "Mr. Clerk, enter the plea of not guilty."

After a short opening address from Mr. Van der School, Hiram was summoned to the bar to give his testimony. It was delivered to the letter, perhaps, but with all that moral coloring which can be conveyed under such expressions as, "thinking no harm," "feeling it my bounden duty as a magistrate," and "seeing that the constable was back'ard in the business." When he had done, and the district attorney declined putting any further interrogatories, Mr. Lippert arose, with an air of keen investigation, and asked the following questions:

"Are you a constable of this county, sir?"

"No, sir," said Hiram, "I'm only a justice-peace."

"I ask you, Mr. Doolittle, in the face of this court, putting it to your conscience and your knowledge of the law, whether you had any right to enter that man's dwelling?"

"Hem!" said Hiram, undergoing a violent struggle between his desire for vengeance, and his love of legal fame: "I do suppose—that is—strict law—that supposing—maybe I hadn't a real—lawful right; but as the case was—and Billy was so back'ard—I thought I might come for'ard in the business."

"I ask you again, sir," continued the lawyer, following up his success, "whether this old, this friendless old man, did or did not repeatedly forbid your entrance?"

"Why, I must say," said Hiram, "that he was considerable cross-grained; not what I call clever, seeing that it was only one neighbor wanting to go into the house of another."

"Oh! then you own it was only meant for a neighborly visit on your part, and without the sanction of law. Remember, gentlemen, the words of the witness, 'one neighbor wanting to enter the house of another.' Now, sir, I ask you if Nathaniel Bumppo did not again and

again order you not to enter?"

"There was some words passed between us," said Hiram, "but I read the warrant to him aloud."

"I repeat my question; did he tell you not to enter his habitation?"

"There was a good deal passed betwixt us—but I've the warrant in my pocket; maybe the court would wish to see it?"

"Witness," said Judge Temple, "answer the question directly; did or did not the prisoner forbid your entering his hut?"

"Why, I some think—"

"Answer without equivocation," continued the Judge sternly.

"He did."

"And did you attempt to enter after his order?"

"I did; but the warrant was in my hand."

"Proceed, Mr. Lippert, with your examination."

But the attorney saw that the impression was in favor of his client, and waving his hand with a supercilious manner, as if unwilling to insult the understanding of the jury with any further defence, he replied:

"No, sir; I leave it for your honor to charge; I rest my case here."

"Mr. District Attorney," said the Judge, "have you anything to say?"

Mr. Van der School removed his spectacles, folded them and, replacing them once more on his nose, eyed the other bill which he held in his hand, and then said, looking at the bar over the top of his glasses; "I shall rest the prosecution here, if the court please."

Judge Temple arose and began the charge.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "you have heard the testimony, and I shall detain you but a moment. If an officer meet with resistance in the execution of a process, he has an undoubted right to call any citizen to his assistance; and the acts of such assistant come within the protection of the law. I shall leave you to judge, gentlemen, from the testimony, how far the witness in this prosecution can be so considered, feeling less reluctance to submit the case thus informally to your decision, because there is yet another indictment to be tried, which involves heavier charges against the unfortunate prisoner."

The tone of Marmaduke was mild and insinuating, and, as his sentiments were given with such apparent impartiality, they did not fail of carrying due weight with the jury. The grave-looking yeomen who composed this tribunal laid their heads together for a few minutes, without leaving the box, when the foreman arose, and, after the forms of the court were duly observed, he pronounced the prisoner to be "Not guilty."

"You are acquitted of this charge, Nathaniel Bumppo," said the Judge.

"Anan!" said Natty.

"You are found not guilty of striking and assaulting Mr. Doolittle."

"No, no, I'll not deny but that I took him a little roughly by the shoulders," said Natty, looking about him with great simplicity, "and that I—"

"You are acquitted," interrupted the Judge, "and there is nothing further to be said or done in the matter."

A look of joy lighted up the features of the old man, who now comprehended the case, and, placing his cap eagerly on his head again, he threw up the bar of his little prison, and said, feelingly:

"I must say this for you, Judge Temple, that the law has not been so hard on me as I dreaded. I hope God will bless you for the kind things you've done to me this day."

But the staff of the constable was opposed to his egress, and Mr. Lippert whispered a few words in his ear, when the aged hunter sank back into his place, and, removing his cap, stroked down the remnants of his gray and sandy locks, with an air of mortification mingled with submission.

"Mr. District Attorney," said Judge Temple, affecting to busy himself with his minutes, "proceed with the second indictment."

Mr. Van der School took great care that no part of the presentment, which he now read, should be lost on his auditors. It accused the prisoner of resisting the execution of a search-warrant, by force of arms, and particularized in the vague language of the law, among a variety of other weapons, the use of the rifle. This was indeed a more serious charge than an ordinary assault and battery, and a corresponding degree of interest was manifested by the spectators in its result. The prisoner was duly arraigned, and his plea again demanded. Mr. Lippert had anticipated the answers of Natty, and in a whisper advised him how to plead. But the feelings of the old hunter were awakened by some of the expressions in the indictment, and, forgetful of his caution, he exclaimed:

"'Tis a wicked untruth; I crave no man's blood. Them thieves, the Iroquois, won't say it to any face that I ever thirsted after man's blood, I have fou't as soldier that feared his Maker and his officer, but I never pulled trigger on any but a warrior that was up and awake. No man can say that I ever struck even a Mingo in his blanket. I believe there's some who thinks there's no God in a wilder ness!"

"Attend to your plea, Bumppo," said the Judge; "you hear that you are accused of using your rifle against an officer of justice? Are you guilty or not guilty?"

By this time the irritated feelings of Natty had found vent: and he rested on the bar for a moment, in a musing posture, when he lifted his face, with his silent laugh, and, pointing to where the wood-chopper stood, he said:

"Would Billy Kirby be standing there, d'ye think, if I had used the rifle?"

"Then you deny it," said Mr. Lippert; "you plead not guilty?"

"Sartain," said Natty; "Billy knows that I never fired at all. Billy, do you remember the turkey last winter? Ah me! that was better than common firing; but I can't shoot as I used to could."

"Enter the plea of not guilty," said Judge Temple, strongly affected by the simplicity of the prisoner.

Hiram was again sworn, and his testimony given on the second charge. He had discovered his former error, and proceeded more cautiously than before. He related very distinctly and, for the man, with amazing terseness, the suspicion against the hunter, the complaint, the issuing of the warrant, and the swearing in of Kirby; all of which, he affirmed, were done in due form of law. He then added the manner in which the constable had been received; and stated, distinctly, that Natty had pointed the rifle at Kirby, and threatened his life if he attempted to execute his duty. All this was confirmed by Jotham, who was observed to adhere closely to the story of the magistrate. Mr. Lippert conducted an artful cross-examination of these two witnesses, but, after consuming much time, was compelled to relinquish the attempt to obtain any advantage, in despair.

At length the District Attorney called the wood-chopper to the bar, Billy gave an extremely confused account of the whole affair, although he evidently aimed at the truth, until Mr. Van der School aided him, by asking some direct questions:

"It appears from examining the papers, that you demanded admission into the hut legally; so you were put in bodily fear by his rifle and threats?"

"I didn't mind them that, man," said Billy, snapping his fingers; "I should be a poor stick to mind old Leather-Stocking."

"But I understood you to say (referring to your previous words [as delivered here in court] in the commencement of your testimony) that you thought he meant to shoot you?"

"To be sure I did; and so would you, too, squire, if you had seen a chap dropping a muzzle that never misses, and cocking an eye that has a natural squint by long practice I thought there would be a dust on't, and my back was up at once; but Leather-Stocking gi'n up the skin, and so the matter ended."

"Ah! Billy," said Natty, shaking his head, "'twas a lucky thought in me to throw out the hide, or there might have been blood spilt; and I'm sure, if it had been your'n, I should have mourned it sorely the little while I have to stay."

"Well, Leather-Stocking," returned Billy, facing the prisoner with a freedom and familiarity that utterly disregarded the presence of the court, "as you are on the subject it may be that you've no—"

"Go on with your examination, Mr. District Attorney."

That gentleman eyed the familiarity between his witness and the prisoner with manifest disgust, and indicated to the court that he was done.

"Then you didn't feel frightened, Mr. Kirby?" said the counsel for the prisoner.

"Me! no," said Billy, casting his eyes over his own huge frame with evident self-satisfaction; "I'm not to be skeared so easy."

"You look like a hardy man; where were you born, sir?"

"Varmount State; 'tis a mountaynious place, but there's a stiff soil, and it's pretty much wooded with beech and maple."

"I have always heard so," said Mr. Lippert soothingly. "You have been used to the rifle yourself in that country."

"I pull the second best trigger in this county. I knock under to Natty Bumppo, there, sin' he shot the pigeon."

Leather-Stocking raised his head, and laughed again, when he abruptly thrust out a wrinkled hand, and said:

"You're young yet, Billy, and haven't seen the matches that I have; but here's my hand; I bear no malice to you, I don't."

Mr. Lippert allowed this conciliatory offering to be accepted, and judiciously paused, while the spirit of peace was exercising its influence over the two; but the Judge interposed his authority.

"This is an improper place for such dialogues," he said; "proceed with your examination of this witness, Mr. Lippert, or I shall order the next."

The attorney started, as if unconscious of any impropriety, and continued:

"So you settled the matter with Natty amicably on the spot, did you?"

"He gi'n me the skin, and I didn't want to quarrel with an old man; for my part, I see no such mighty matter in shooting a buck!"

"And you parted friends? and you would never have thought of bringing the business up before a court, hadn't you been subpoenaed?"

"I don't think I should; he gi'n the skin, and I didn't feel a hard thought, though Squire Doolittle got some affronted."

"I have done, sir," said Mr. Lippert, probably relying on the charge of the Judge, as he again seated himself, with the air of a main who felt that his success was certain.

When Mr. Van der School arose to address the jury, he commenced by saying:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I should have interrupted the leading questions put by the prisoner's counsel (by leading questions I mean telling him what to say), did I not feel confident that the law of the land was superior to any advantages (I mean legal advantages) which he might obtain by his art. The counsel for the prisoner, gentlemen, has endeavored to persuade you, in opposition to your own good sense, to believe that pointing a rifle at a constable (elected or deputed) is a very innocent affair; and that society (I mean the commonwealth, gentlemen) shall not be endangered thereby. But let me claim your attention, while we look over the particulars of this heinous offence." Here Mr. Van der School favored the jury with an abridgment of the testimony, recounted in such a manner as utterly to confuse the faculties of his worthy listeners. After this exhibition he closed as follows: "And now, gentlemen, having thus made plain to your senses the crime of which this unfortunate man has been guilty (unfortunate both on account of his ignorance and his guilt), I shall leave you to your own consciences; not in the least doubting that you will see the importance (notwithstanding the prisoner's counsel [doubtless relying on your former verdict] wishes to appear so confident of success) of punishing the offender, and

asserting the dignity of the laws.”

It was now the duty of the Judge to deliver his charge. It consisted of a short, comprehensive summary of the testimony, laying bare the artifice of the prisoner's counsel, and placing the facts in so obvious a light that they could not well be misunderstood. “Living as we do, gentlemen,” he concluded, “on the skirts of society, it becomes doubly necessary to protect the ministers of the law. If you believe the witnesses, in their construction of the acts of the prisoner, it is your duty to convict him; but if you believe that the old man, who this day appears before you, meant not to harm the constable, but was acting more under the influence of habit than by the instigations of malice, it will be your duty to judge him, but to do it with lenity.”

As before, the jury did not leave their box; but, after a consultation of some little time, their foreman arose, and pronounced the prisoner Guilty.

There was but little surprise manifested in the courtroom at this verdict, as the testimony, the greater part of which we have omitted, was too clear and direct to be passed over. The judges seemed to have anticipated this sentiment, for a consultation was passing among them also, during the deliberation of the jury, and the preparatory movements of the “bench” announced the coming sentence.

“Nathaniel Bumpo,” commenced the Judge, making the customary pause.

The old hunter, who had been musing again, with his head on the bar, raised himself, and cried, with a prompt, military tone:

“Here.”

The Judge waved his hand for silence, and proceeded:

“In forming their sentence, the court have been governed as much by the consideration of your ignorance of the laws as by a strict sense of the importance of punishing such outrages as this of which you have been found guilty. They have therefore passed over the obvious punishment of whipping on the bare back, in mercy to your years; but, as the dignity of the law requires an open exhibition of the consequences of your crime, it is ordered that you be conveyed from this room to the public stocks, where you are to be confined for one hour; that you pay a fine to the State of one hundred dollars; and that you be imprisoned in the jail of this county for one calendar month, and, furthermore, that your imprisonment do not cease until the said fine shall be paid. I feel it my duty, Nathaniel Bumpo—”

“And where should I get the money?” interrupted the Leather-Stocking eagerly; “where should I get the money? you'll take away the bounty on the painters, because I cut the throat of a deer; and how is an old man to find so much gold or silver in the woods? No, no, Judge; think better of it, and don't talk of shutting me up in a jail for the little time I have to stay.”

“If you have anything to urge against the passing of the sentence, the court will yet hear you,” said the Judge, mildly.

“I have enough to say agin' it,” cried Natty, grasping the bar on which his fingers were working with a convulsed motion. “Where am I to get the money? Let me out into the woods and hills, where I've been used to breathe the clear air, and though I'm threescore and ten, if you've left game enough in the country, I'll travel night and day but I'll make you up the sum afore the season is over. Yes, yes—you see the reason of the thing, and the wicked ness of shutting up an old man that has spent his days, as one may say, where he could always look into the windows of heaven.”

“I must be governed by the law—”

“Talk not to me of law, Marmaduke Temple,” interrupted the hunter. “Did the beast of the forest mind your laws, when it was thirsty and hungering for the blood of your own child? She was kneeling to her God for a greater favor than I ask, and he heard her; and if you now say no to my prayers, do you think he will be deaf?”

“My private feelings must not enter into—”

“Hear me, Marmaduke Temple,” interrupted the old man, with melancholy earnestness, “and hear reason. I've travelled these mountains when you was no judge, but an infant in your mother's arms; and I feel as if I had a right and a privilege to travel them agin afore I die. Have you forgot the time that you come on to the lake shore, when there wasn't even a jail to lodge in: and didn't I give you my own bear-skin to sleep on, and the fat of a noble buck to satisfy the cravings of your hunger? Yes, yes—you thought it no sin then to kill a deer! And this I did, though I had no reason to love you, for you had never done anything but harm to them that loved and sheltered me. And now, will you shut me up in your dungeons to pay me for my kindness? A hundred dollars! Where should I get the money? No, no—there's them that says hard things of you, Marmaduke Temple, but you ain't so bad as to wish to see an old man die in a prison, because he stood up for the right. Come, friend, let me pass; it's long sin' I've been used to such crowds, and I crave to be in the woods agin. Don't fear me, Judge—I bid you not to fear me; for if there's beaver enough left on the streams, or the buckskins will sell for a shilling apiece, you shall have the last penny of the fine. Where are ye, pups? come away, dogs, come away! we have a grievous toil to do for our years, but it shall be done—yes, yes, I've promised it, and it shall be done!”

It is unnecessary to say that the movement of the Leather-Stocking was again intercepted by the constable; but, before he had time to speak, a bustling in the crowd, and a loud hem, drew all eyes to another part of the room.

Benjamin had succeeded in edging his way through the people, and was now seen balancing his short body, with one foot in a window and the other on a railing of the jury-box. To the amazement of the whole court, the steward was evidently preparing to speak. After a good deal of difficulty, he succeeded in drawing from his pocket a small bag, and then found utterance.

“If-so-be,” he said, “that your honor is agreeable to trust the poor fellow out on another cruise among the beasts, here's a small matter that will help to bring down the risk, seeing that there's just thirty-five of your Spaniards in it; and I wish, from the bottom of my heart, that they was raal British guineas, for the sake of the old boy. But 'tis as it is; and if Squire Dickens will just be so good as to overhaul this small bit of an account, and take enough from the bag to settle the same, he's welcome to hold on upon the rest, till such time as the Leather-Stocking can grapple with them said beaver, or, for that matter, forever, and no thanks asked.”

As Benjamin concluded, he thrust out the wooden register of his arrears to the “Bold Dragoon” with one hand, while he offered his bag of dollars with the other. Astonishment at this singular interruption produced a profound stillness in the room, which was only

interrupted by the sheriff, who struck his sword on the table, and cried: "Silence!"

"There must be an end to this," said the Judge, struggling to overcome his feelings. "Constable, lead the prisoner to the stocks. Mr. Clerk, what stands next on the calendar?"

Natty seemed to yield to his destiny, for he sank his head on his chest, and followed the officer from the court room in silence. The crowd moved back for the passage of the prisoner, and when his tall form was seen descending from the outer door, a rush of the people to the scene of his disgrace followed.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Ha! ha! look! he wears cruel garters!"—Lear.

The punishments of the common law were still known, at the time of our tale, to the people of New York; and the whipping-post, and its companion, the stocks, were not yet supplanted by the more merciful expedients of the public prison. Immediately in front of the jail those relics of the older times were situated, as a lesson of precautionary justice to the evil-doers of the settlement.

Natty followed the constables to this spot, bowing his head in submission to a power that he was unable to oppose, and surrounded by the crowd that formed a circle about his person, exhibiting in their countenances strong curiosity. A constable raised the upper part of the stocks, and pointed with his finger to the holes where the old man was to place his feet. Without making the least objection to the punishment, the Leather-Stocking quietly seated himself on the ground, and suffered his limbs to be laid in the openings, without even a murmur; though he cast one glance about him, in quest of that sympathy that human nature always seems to require under suffering but he met no direct manifestations of pity, neither did he see any unfeeling exultation, or hear a single reproachful epithet. The character of the mob, if it could be called by such a name, was that of attentive subordination.

The constable was in the act of lowering the upper plank, when Benjamin, who had pressed close to the side of the prisoner, said, in his hoarse tone, as if seeking for some cause to create a quarrel:

"Where away, master constable, is the use of clapping a man in them here bilboes? It neither stops his grog nor hurts his back; what for is it that you do the thing?"

"'Tis the sentence of the court, Mr. Penguillium, and there's law for it, I s'pose."

"Ay, ay, I know that there's law for the thing; but where away do you find the use, I say? it does no harm, and it only keeps a man by the heels for the small matter of two glasses."

"Is it no harm, Benny Pump," said Natty, raising his eyes with a piteous look in the face of the steward—"is it no harm to show off a man in his seventy-first year, like a tame bear, for the settlers to look on? Is it no harm to put an old soldier, that has served through the war of 'fifty-six, and seen the enemy in the 'seventy-six business, into a place like this, where the boys can point at him and say, I have known the time when he was a spectacle for the county? Is it no harm to bring down the pride of an honest man to be the equal of the beasts of the forest?"

Benjamin stared about him fiercely, and could he have found a single face that expressed contumely, he would have been prompt to quarrel with its owner; but meeting everywhere with looks of sobriety, and occasionally of commiseration, he very deliberately seated himself by the side of the hunter, and, placing his legs in the two vacant holes of the stocks, he said:

"Now lower away, master constable, lower away, I tell ye! If-so-be there's such a thing hereabouts, as a man that wants to see a bear, let him look and be d—d, and he shall find two of them, and mayhap one of the same that can bite as well as growl."

"But I have no orders to put you in the stocks, Mr. Pump," cried the constable; "you must get up and let me do my duty."

"You've my orders, and what do you need better to meddle with my own feet? so lower away, will ye, and let me see the man that chooses to open his mouth with a grin on it."

"There can't be any harm in locking up a creatur' that will enter the pound," said the constable, laughing, and closing the stocks on them both.

It was fortunate that this act was executed with decision, for the whole of the spectators, when they saw Benjamin assume the position he took, felt an inclination for merriment, which few thought it worth while to suppress. The steward struggled violently for his liberty again, with an evident intention of making battle on those who stood nearest to him; but the key was already turned, and all his efforts were vain.

"Hark ye, master constable," he cried, "just clear away your bilboes for the small matter of a log-glass, will ye, and let me show some of them there chaps who it is they are so merry about."

"No, no, you would go in, and you can't come out," returned the officer, "until the time has expired that the Judge directed for the keeping of the prisoner."

Benjamin, finding that his threats and his struggles were useless, had good sense enough to learn patience from the resigned manner of his companion, and soon settled himself down by the side of Natty, with a contemptuousness expressed in his hard features, that showed he had substituted disgust for rage. When the violence of the steward's feelings had in some measure subsided, he turned to his fellow-sufferer, and, with a motive that might have vindicated a worse effusion, he attempted the charitable office of consolation,

"Taking it by and large, Master Bump-ho, it's but a small matter after all," he said. "Now, I've known very good sort of men, aboard of the Boadishy, laid by the heels, for nothing, mayhap, but forgetting that they'd drunk their allowance already, when a glass of grog has come in their way. This is nothing more than riding with two anchors ahead, waiting for a turn in the tide, or a shift of wind, d'ye see, with a soft bottom and plenty of room for the sweep of your hawse. Now I've seen many a man, for over-shooting his reckoning, as I told ye moored head and stern, where he couldn't so much as heave his broadside round, and mayhap a stopper clapped on his tongue too, in the shape of a pump-bolt lashed athwartship his jaws, all the same as an outrigger along side of a taffrel-rail."

The hunter appeared to appreciate the kind intentions of the other, though he could not understand his eloquence, and, raising his humbled countenance, he attempted a smile, as he said:

"Anan!"

"'Tis nothing, I say, but a small matter of a squall that will soon blow over," continued Benjamin. "To you that has such a length of keel, it must be all the same as nothing; thof, seeing that I am little short in my lower timbers, they've triced my heels up in such a way as to give me a bit of a cant. But what cares I, Master Bump-ho, if the ship strains a little at her anchor? it's only for a dog-watch, and dam'me but she'll sail with you then on that cruise after them said beaver. I'm not much used to small arms, seeing that I was stationed at the ammunition-boxes, being summat too low-rigged to see over the hammock-cloths; but I can carry the game, dye see, and mayhap make out to lend a hand with the traps; and if so, be you're any way so handy with them as ye be with your boat-hook, 'twill be but a short cruise after all, I've squared the yards with Squire Dickens this morning, and I shall send him word that he needn't bear my name on the books again till such time as the cruise is over."

"You're used to dwell with men, Benny," said Leather-Stocking, mournfully, "and the ways of the woods would be hard on you, if —"

"Not a bit—not a bit," cried the steward; "I'm none of your fair-weather chaps, Master Bump-ho, as sails only in smooth water. When I find a friend, I sticks by him, dye see. Now, there's no better man a-going than Squire Dickens, and I love him about the same as I loves Mistress Hollister's new keg of Jamaiky." The steward paused, and turning his uncouth visage on the hunter, he surveyed him with a roguish leer of his eye, and gradually suffered the muscles of his hard features to relax, until his face was illuminated by the display of his white teeth, when he dropped his voice, and added; "I say, Master Leather-Stocking, 'tis fresher and livelier than any Hollands you'll get in Garnsey. But we'll send a hand over and ask the woman for a taste, for I'm so jammed in these here bilboes that I begin to want summat to lighten my upper works."

Natty sighed, and gazed about him on the crowd, that already began to disperse, and which had now diminished greatly, as its members scattered in their various pursuits. He looked wistfully at Benjamin, but did not reply; a deeply-seated anxiety seeming to absorb every other sensation, and to throw a melancholy gloom over his wrinkled features, which were working with the movements of his mind.

The steward was about to act on the old principle, that silence gives consent, when Hiram Doolittle, attended by Jotham, stalked out of the crowd, across the open space, and approached the stocks. The magistrate passed by the end where Benjamin was seated, and posted himself, at a safe distance from the steward, in front of the Leather-Stocking. Hiram stood, for a moment, cowering before the keen looks that Natty fastened on him, and suffering under an embarrassment that was quite new; when having in some degree recovered himself, he looked at the heavens, and then at the smoky atmosphere, as if it were only an ordinary meeting with a friend, and said in his formal, hesitating way:

"Quite a scurcity of rain, lately; I some think we shall have a long drought on't."

Benjamin was occupied in untying his bag of dollars, and did not observe the approach of the magistrate, while Natty turned his face, in which every muscle was working, away from him in disgust, without answering. Rather encouraged than daunted by this exhibition of dislike, Hiram, after a short pause, continued:

"The clouds look as if they'd no water in them, and the earth is dreadfully parched. To my judgment, there'll be short crops this season, if the rain doesn't fail quite speedily."

The air with which Mr. Doolittle delivered this prophetic opinion was peculiar to his species. It was a jesuitical, cold, unfeeling, and selfish manner, that seemed to say, "I have kept within the law," to the man he had so cruelly injured. It quite overcame the restraint that the old hunter had been laboring to impose on himself, and he burst out in a warm glow of indignation.

"Why should the rain fall from the clouds," he cried, "when you force the tears from the eyes of the old, the sick, and the poor! Away with ye—away with ye! you may be formed in the image of the Maker, but Satan dwells in your heart. Away with ye, I say! I am mournful, and the sight of ye brings bitter thoughts."

Benjamin ceased thumbing his money, and raised his head at the instant that Hiram, who was thrown off his guard by the invectives of the hunter, unluckily trusted his person within reach of the steward, who grasped one of his legs with a hand that had the grip of a vise, and whirled the magistrate from his feet, before he had either time to collect his senses or to exercise the strength he did really possess. Benjamin wanted neither proportions nor manhood in his head, shoulders, and arms, though all the rest of his frame appeared to be originally intended for a very different sort of a man. He exerted his physical powers on the present occasion, with much discretion; and, as he had taken his antagonist at a great disadvantage, the struggle resulted very soon in Benjamin getting the magistrate fixed in a posture somewhat similar to his own, and manfully placed face to face.

"You're a ship's cousin, I tell ye, Master Doo-but-little," roared the steward; "some such matter as a ship's cousin, sir. I know you, I do, with your fair-weather speeches to Squire Dickens, to his face, and then you go and sarve out your grumblin' to all the old women in the town, do ye? Ain't it enough for any Christian, let him harbor never so much malice, to get an honest old fellow laid by the heels in this fashion, without carrying sail so hard on the poor dog, as if you would run him down as he lay at his anchors? But I've logged many a hard thing against your name, master, and now the time's come to foot up the day's work, d'ye see; so square yourself, you lubber, square yourself, and we'll soon know who's the better man."

"Jotham!" cried the frightened magistrate—"Jotham! call in the constables. Mr. Pengullium, I command the peace—I order you to keep the peace."

"There's been more peace than love atwixt us, master," cried the steward, making some very unequivocal demonstrations toward hostility; "so mind yourself! square your self, I say! do you smell this here bit of a sledge-hammer?"

"Lay hands on me if you dare!" exclaimed Hiram, as well as he could, under the grasp which the steward held on his throttle—"lay hands on me if you dare!"

"If you call this laying, master, you are welcome to the eggs," roared the steward.

It becomes our disagreeable duty to record here, that the acts of Benjamin now became violent; for he darted his sledge-hammer



violently on the anvil of Mr. Doolittle's countenance, and the place became in an instant a scene of tumult and confusion. The crowd rushed in a dense circle around the spot, while some ran to the court room to give the alarm, and one or two of the more juvenile part of the multitude had a desperate trial of speed to see who should be the happy man to communicate the critical situation of the magistrate to his wife.

Benjamin worked away, with great industry and a good deal of skill, at his occupation, using one hand to raise up his antagonist, while he knocked him over with the other; for he would have been disgraced in his own estimation, had he struck a blow on a fallen adversary. By this considerate arrangement he had found means to hammer the visage of Hiram out of all shape, by the time Richard succeeded in forcing his way through the throng to the point of combat. The sheriff afterward declared that, independently of his mortification as preserver of the peace of the county, at this interruption to its harmony, he was never so grieved in his life as when he saw this breach of unity between his favorites. Hiram had in some degree become necessary to his vanity, and Benjamin, strange as it may appear, he really loved. This attachment was exhibited in the first words that he uttered.

"Squire Doolittle! Squire Doolittle! I am ashamed to see a man of your character and office forget himself so much as to disturb the peace, insult the court, and beat poor Benjamin in this manner!"

At the sound of Mr. Jones' voice, the steward ceased his employment, and Hiram had an opportunity of raising his discomfited visage toward the mediator. Emboldened by the sight of the sheriff, Mr. Doolittle again had recourse to his lungs.

"I'll have law on you for this," he cried desperately; "I'll have the law on you for this. I call on you, Mr. Sheriff, to seize this man, and I demand that you take his body into custody."

By this time Richard was master of the true state of the case, and, turning to the steward, he said reproach fully:

"Benjamin, how came you in the stocks? I always thought you were mild and docile as a lamb. It was for your docility that I most esteemed you. Benjamin! Benjamin! you have not only disgraced yourself, but your friends, by this shameless conduct, Bless me! bless me! Mr. Doolittle, he seems to have knocked your face all of one side."

Hiram by this time had got on his feet again, and with out the reach of the steward, when he broke forth in violent appeals for vengeance. The offence was too apparent to be passed over, and the sheriff, mindful of the impartiality exhibited by his cousin in the recent trial of the Leather-Stocking, came to the painful conclusion that it was necessary to commit his major-domo to prison. As the time of Natty's punishment was expired, and Benjamin found that they were to be confined, for that night at least, in the same apartment, he made no very strong objection to the measure, nor spoke of bail, though, as the sheriff preceded the party of constables that conducted them to the jail, he uttered the following remonstrance:

"As to being berthed with Master Bump-ho for a night or so, it's but little I think of it, Squire Dickens, seeing that I calls him an honest man, and one as has a handy way with boat-hooks and rifles; but as for owning that a man deserves anything worse than a double allowance, for knocking that carpenters face a-one-side, as you call it, I'll maintain it's agin' reason and Christianity. If there's a bloodsucker in this 'ere county, it's that very chap. Ay! I know him! and if he hasn't got all the same as dead wood in his headworks, he knows summat of me. Where's the mighty harm, squire, that you take it so much to heart? It's all the same as any other battle, d'ye see sir, being broadside to broadside, only that it was foot at anchor, which was what we did in Port Pray a roads, when Suffring came in among us; and a suff'ring time he had of it before he got out again."

Richard thought it unworthy of him to make any reply to this speech, but when his prisoners were safely lodged in an outer dungeon, ordering the bolts to be drawn and the key turned, he withdrew.

Benjamin held frequent and friendly dialogues with different people, through the iron gratings, during the afternoon; but his companion paced their narrow limits, in his moccasins, with quick, impatient treads, his face hanging on his breast in dejection, or when lifted, at moments, to the idlers at the window, lighted, perhaps, for an instant, with the childish aspect of aged forgetfulness, which would vanish directly in an expression of deep and obvious anxiety.

At the close of the day, Edwards was seen at the window, in earnest dialogue with his friend; and after he departed it was thought that he had communicated words of comfort to the hunter, who threw himself on his pallet and was soon in a deep sleep. The curious spectators had exhausted the conversation of the steward, who had drunk good fellowship with half of his acquaintance, and, as Natty was no longer in motion, by eight o'clock, Billy Kirby, who was the last loungee at the window, retired into the "Templeton Coffee-house," when Natty rose and hung a blanket before the opening, and the prisoners apparently retired for the night.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

"And to avoid the foe's pursuit,  
With spurring put their cattle to't;  
And till all four were out of wind,  
And danger too, neer looked behind."  
—Hudibras.

As the shades of evening approached, the jurors, wit nesses, and other attendants on the court began to disperse, and before nine o'clock the village was quiet, and its streets nearly deserted. At that hour Judge Temple and his daughter, followed at a short distance by Louisa Grant, walked slowly down the avenue, under the slight shadows of the young poplars, holding the following discourse:

"You can best soothe his wounded spirit, my child," said Marmaduke; "but it will be dangerous to touch on the nature of his offence; the sanctity of the laws must be respected."

"Surely, sir," cried the impatient Elizabeth, "those laws that condemn a man like the Leather-Stocking to so severe a punishment, for an offence that even I must think very venial, cannot be perfect in themselves."

"Thou talkest of what thou dost not understand, Elizabeth," returned her father. "Society cannot exist without wholesome restraints. Those restraints cannot be inflicted without security and respect to the persons of those who administer them; and it would sound ill indeed to report that a judge had extended favor to a convicted criminal, because he had saved the life of his child."

"I see—I see the difficulty of your situation, dear sir," cried the daughter; "but, in appreciating the offence of poor Natty, I cannot separate the minister of the law from the man."

"There thou talkest as a woman, child; it is not for an assault on Hiram Doolittle, but for threatening the life of a constable, who was in the performance of—"

"It is immaterial whether it be one or the other," interrupted Miss Temple, with a logic that contained more feeling than reason; "I know Natty to be innocent, and thinking so I must think all wrong who oppress him."

"His judge among the number! thy father, Elizabeth?"

"Nay, nay, nay; do not put such questions to me; give me my commission, father, and let me proceed to execute it."

The Judge paused a moment, smiling fondly on his child, and then dropped his hand affectionately on her shoulder, as he answered:

"Thou hast reason, Bess, and much of it, too, but thy heart lies too near thy head, But listen; in this pocketbook are two hundred dollars. Go to the prison—there are none in this pace to harm thee—give this note to the jailer, and, when thou seest Bumpo, say what thou wilt to the poor old man; give scope to the feeling of thy warm heart; but try to remember, Elizabeth, that the laws alone remove us from the condition of the savages; that he has been criminal, and that his judge was thy father."

Miss Temple made no reply, but she pressed the hand that held the pocket-book to her bosom, and, taking her friend by the arm, they issued together from the inclosure into the principal street of the village.

As they pursued their walk in silence, under the row of houses, where the deeper gloom of the evening effectually concealed their persons, no sound reached them, excepting the slow tread of a yoke of oxen, with the rattling of a cart, that were moving along the street in the same direction with themselves. The figure of the teamster was just discernible by the dim light, lounging by the side of his cattle with a listless air, as if fatigued by the toil of the day. At the corner, where the jail stood, the progress of the ladies was impeded, for a moment, by the oxen, who were turned up to the side of the building, and given a lock of hay, which they had carried on their necks, as a reward for their patient labor. The whole of this was so natural, and so common, that Elizabeth saw nothing to induce a second glance at the team, until she heard the teamster speaking to his cattle in a low voice:

"Mind yourself, Brindle; will you, sir! will you!" The language itself was so unusual to oxen, with which all who dwell in a new country are familiar; but there was something in the voice, also, that startled Miss Temple. On turning the corner, she necessarily approached the man, and her look was enabled to detect the person of Oliver Edwards, concealed under the coarse garb of a teamster. Their eyes met at the same instant, and, not withstanding the gloom, and the enveloping cloak of Elizabeth, the recognition was mutual.

"Miss Temple!" "Mr. Edwards!" were exclaimed simultaneously, though a feeling that seemed common to both rendered the words nearly inaudible.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Edwards, after the moment of doubt had passed; "do I see you so nigh the jail! but you are going to the rectory: I beg pardon, Miss Grant, I believe; I did not recognize you at first."

The sigh which Louisa uttered was so faint, that it was only heard by Elizabeth, who replied quickly, "We are going not only to the jail, Mr. Edwards' but into it. We wish to show the Leather-Stocking that we do not forget his services, and that at the same time we must be just, we are also grateful. I suppose you are on a similar errand; but let me beg that you will give us leave to precede you ten minutes. Good-night, sir; I—I—am quite sorry, Mr. Edwards, to see you reduced to such labor; I am sure my father would—"

"I shall wait your pleasure, madam," interrupted the youth coldly. "May I beg that you will not mention my being here?"

"Certainly," said Elizabeth, returning his bow by a slight inclination of her head, and urging the tardy Louisa forward. As they entered the jailer's house, however, Miss Grant found leisure to whisper:

"Would it not be well to offer part of your money to Oliver? half of it will pay the fine of Bumpo; and he is so unused to hardships! I am sure my father will subscribe much of his little pittance, to place him in a station that is more worthy of him."

The involuntary smile that passed over the features of Elizabeth was blended with an expression of deep and heartfelt pity. She did not reply, however, and the appearance of the jailer soon recalled the thoughts of both to the object of their visit.

The rescue of the ladies, and their consequent interest in his prisoner, together with the informal manners that prevailed in the country, all united to prevent any surprise on the part of the jailer, at their request for admission to Bumpo. The note of Judge Temple, however, would have silenced all objections, if he had felt them and he led the way without hesitation to the apartment that held the prisoners. The instant the key was put into the lock, the hoarse voice of Benjamin was heard, demanding:

“Yo hoy! who comes there?”

“Some visitors that you’ll be glad to see,” returned the jailer. “What have you done to the lock, that it won’t turn.”

“Handsomely, handsomely, master,” cried the steward: “I have just drove a nail into a berth alongside of this here bolt, as a stopper, d’ye see, so that Master Doo-but-little can’t be running in and breezing up another fight atwixt us: for, to my account, there’ll be but a han-yan with me soon, seeing that they’ll mulct me of my Spaniards, all the same as if I’d over-flogged the lubber. Throw your ship into the wind, and lay by for a small matter, will ye? and I’ll soon clear a passage.”

The sounds of hammering gave an assurance that the steward was in earnest, and in a short time the lock yielded, when the door was opened.

Benjamin had evidently been anticipating the seizure of his money, for he had made frequent demands on the favorite cask at the “Bold Dragoon,” during the afternoon and evening, and was now in that state which by marine imagery is called “half-seas-over.” It was no easy thing to destroy the balance of the old tar by the effects of liquor, for, as he expressed it himself, “he was too low-rigged not to carry sail in all weathers;” but he was precisely in that condition which is so expressively termed “muddy.” When he perceived who the visitors were, he retreated to the side of the room where his pallet lay, and, regardless of the presence of his young mistress, seated himself on it with an air of great sobriety, placing his back firmly against the wall.

“If you undertake to spoil my locks in this manner, Mr. Pump,” said the jailer, “I shall put a stopper, as you call it, on your legs, and tie you down to your bed.”

“What for should ye, master?” grumbled Benjamin; “I’ve rode out one squall to-day anchored by the heels, and I wants no more of them. Where’s the harm o’ doing all the same as yourself? Leave that there door free out board, and you’ll find no locking inboard, I’ll promise ye.”

“I must shut up for the night at nine,” said the jailer, “and it’s now forty-two minutes past eight.” He placed the little candle on a rough pine table, and withdrew.

“Leather-Stocking!” said Elizabeth, when the key of the door was turned on them again, “my good friend, Leather-Stocking! I have come on a message of gratitude. Had you submitted to the search, worthy old man, the death of the deer would have been a trifle, and all would have been well——”

“Submit to the sarch!” interrupted Natty, raising his face from resting on his knees, without rising from the corner where he had seated himself; “d’ye think gal, I would let such a varmint into my hut? No, no—I wouldn’t have opened the door to your own sweet countenance then. But they are welcome to search among the coals and ashes now; they’ll find only some such heap as is to be seen at every pot-ashery in the mountains.”

The old man dropped his face again on one hand, and seemed to be lost in melancholy.

“The hut can be rebuilt, and made better than before,” returned Miss Temple; “and it shall be my office to see it done, when your imprisonment is ended.”

“Can ye raise the dead, child?” said Natty, in a sorrowful voice: “can ye go into the place where you’ve laid your fathers, and mothers, and children, and gather together their ashes, and make the same men and women of them as afore? You do not know what ’tis to lay your head for more than forty years under the cover of the same logs, and to look at the same things for the better part of I a man’s life. You are young yet, child, but you are one of the most precious of God’s creatures. I had hoped for ye that it might come to pass, but it’s all over now; this, put to that, will drive the thing quite out of his mind for ever.”

Miss Temple must have understood the meaning of the old man better than the other listeners; for while Louisa stood innocently by her side, commiserating the griefs of the hunter, she bent her head aside, so as to conceal her features. The action and the feeling that caused it lasted but a moment.

“Other logs, and better, though, can be had, and shall be found for you, my old defender,” she continued. “Your confinement will soon be over, and, before that time arrives, I shall have a house prepared for you, where I you may spend the close of your long and harmless life in ease and plenty.”

“Ease and plenty! house!” repeated Natty, slowly. “You mean well, you mean well, and I quite mourn that it cannot be; but he has seen me a sight and a laughing-stock for——”

“Damn your stocks,” said Benjamin, flourishing his bottle with one hand, from which he had been taking hasty and repeated draughts, while he made gestures of disdain with the other: “who cares for his bilboes? There’s a leg that been stuck up on end like a jibboom for an hour, d’ye see, and what’s it the worse for’t, ha? canst tell me, what’s it the worser, ha?”

“I believe you forget, Mr. Pump, in whose presence you are,” said Elizabeth.

“Forget you, Miss Lizzy?” returned the steward; “if I do, dam’m; you are not to be forgot, like Goody Pretty-bones, up at the big house there. I say, old sharpshooter, she may have pretty bones, but I can’t say so much for her flesh, d’ye see, for she looks somewhat like anatomy with another man’s jacket on. Now for the skin of her face, it’s all the same as a new topsail with a taut bolt-rope, being snug at the leeches, but all in a bight about the inner cloths.”

“Peace—I command you to be silent, sir!” said Elizabeth.

"Ay, ay, ma'am," returned the steward. "You didn't say I shouldn't drink, though."

"We will not speak of what is to become of others," said Miss Temple, turning again to the hunter—"but of your own fortunes, Natty. It shall be my care to see that you pass the rest of your days in ease and plenty."

"Ease and plenty!" again repeated the Leather-Stocking; "what ease can there be to an old man, who must walk a mile across the open fields, before he can find a shade to hide him from a scorching sun! or what plenty is there where you hunt a day, and not start a buck, or see anything bigger than a mink, or maybe a stray fox! Ah! I shall have a hard time after them very beavers, for this fine. I must go low toward the Pennsylvania line in search of the creatures, maybe a hundred mile; for they are not to be got here-away. No, no—your betterments and clearings have druv the knowing things out of the country, and instead of beaver-dams, which is the nater of the animal, and according to Providence, you turn back the waters over the low grounds with your mill-dams, as if 'twas in man to stay the drops from going where He wills them to go—Benny, unless you stop your hand from going so often to your mouth, you won't be ready to start when the time comes."

"Hark'ee, Master Bump-ho," said the steward; "don't you fear for Ben, When the watch is called, set me of my legs and give me the bearings and the distance of where you want me to steer, and I'll carry sail with the best of you, I will."

"The time has come now," said the hunter, listening; "I hear the horns of the oxen rubbing agin' the side of the jail."

"Well, say the word, and then heave ahead, shipmate," said Benjamin.

"You won't betray us, gal?" said Natty, looking simply into the face of Elizabeth—"you won't betray an old man, who craves to breathe the clear air of heaven? I mean no harm; and if the law says that I must pay the hundred dollars, I'll take the season through, but it shall be forthcoming; and this good man will help me."

"You catch them," said Benjamin, with a sweeping gesture of his arm, "and if they get away again, call me a slink, that's all."

"But what mean you?" cried the wondering Elizabeth. "Here you must stay for thirty days; but I have the money for your fine in this purse. Take it; pay it in the morning, and summon patience for your mouth. I will come often to see you, with my friend; we will make up your clothes with our own hands; indeed, indeed, you shall be comfortable."

"Would ye, children?" said Natty, advancing across the floor with an air of kindness, and taking the hand of Elizabeth, "would ye be so kearful of an old man, and just for shooting a beast which cost him nothing? Such things doesn't run in the blood, I believe, for you seem not to forget a favor. Your little fingers couldn't do much on a buckskin, nor be you used to push such a thread as sinews. But if he hasn't got past hearing, he shalt hear it and know it, that he may see, like me, there is some who know how to remember a kindness."

"Tell him nothing," cried Elizabeth, earnestly; "if you love me, if you regard my feelings, tell him nothing. It is of yourself only I would talk, and for yourself only I act. I grieve, Leather-Stocking, that the law requires that you should be detained here so long; but, after all, it will be only a short month, and——"

"A month?" exclaimed Natty, opening his mouth with his usual laugh, "not a day, nor a night, nor an hour, gal. Judge Temple may sintence, but he can't keep without a better dungeon than this. I was taken once by the French, and they put sixty-two of us in a block-house, nigh hand to old Frontinac; but 'twas easy to cut through a pine log to them that was used to timber." The hunter paused, and looked cautiously around the room, when, laughing again, he shoved the steward gently from his post, and removing the bedclothes, discovered a hole recently cut in the logs with a mallet and chisel. "It's only a kick, and the outside piece is off, and then——"

"Off! ay, off!" cried Benjamin, rising from his stupor; "well, here's off. Ay! ay! you catch 'em, and I'll hold on to them said beaver-hats."

"I fear this lad will trouble me much," said Natty; "itwill be a hard pull for the mountain, should they take the scent soon, and he is not in a state of mind to run."

"Run!" echoed the steward; "no, sheer alongside, and let's have a fight of it."

"Peace!" ordered Elizabeth.

"Ay, ay, ma'am."

"You will not leave us, surely, Leather-Stocking," continued Miss Temple; "I beseech you, reflect that you will be driven to the woods entirely, and that you are fast getting old. Be patient for a little time, when you can go abroad openly, and with honor."

"Is there beaver to be caught here, gal?"

"If not, here is money to discharge the fine, and in a month you are free. See, here it is in gold."

"Gold!" said Natty, with a kind of childish curiosity; "it's long sin' I've seen a gold-piece. We used to get the broad joes, in the old war, as plenty as the bears be now. I remember there was a man in Dieskau's army, that was killed, who had a dozen of the shining things sewed up in his shirt. I didn't handle them myself, but I seen them cut out with my own eyes; they was bigger and brighter than them be."

"These are English guineas, and are yours," said Elizabeth; "an earnest of what shall be done for you."

"Me! why should you give me this treasure!" said Natty, looking earnestly at the maiden.

"Why! have you not saved my life? Did you not rescue me from the jaws of the beast?" exclaimed Elizabeth, veiling her eyes, as if to hide some hideous object from her view.

The hunter took the money, and continued turning it in his hand for some time, piece by piece, talking aloud during the operation.

"There's a rifle, they say, out on the Cherry Valley, that will carry a hundred rods and kill. I've seen good guns in my day, but none quite equal to that. A hundred rods with any sartainty is great shooting! Well, well—I'm old, and the gun I have will answer my time. Here, child, take back your gold. But the hour has come; I hear him talking to the cattle, and I must be going. You won't tell of us, gal—you won't tell of us, will ye?"

"Tell of you!" echoed Elizabeth. "But take the money, old man; take the money, even if you go into the mountains."

"No, no," said Natty, shaking his head kindly; "I would not rob you so for twenty rifles. But there's one thing you can do for me, if ye will, that no other is at hand to do."

"Name it—name it."

"Why, it's only to buy a canister of powder—'twill cost two silver dollars. Benny Pump has the money ready, but we daren't come into the town to get it. Nobody has it but the Frenchman. 'Tis of the best, and just suits a rifle. Will you get it for me, gal?—say, will you get it for me?"

"Will I? I will bring it to you, Leather-Stocking, though I toil a day in quest of you through the woods. But where shall I find you, and how?"

"Where?" said Natty, musing a moment—"to-morrow on the Vision; on the very top of the Vision, I'll meet you, child, just as the sun gets over our heads. See that it's the fine grain; you'll know it by the gloss and the price."

"I will do it," said Elizabeth, firmly.

Natty now seated himself, and placing his feet in the hole, with a slight effort he opened a passage through into the street. The ladies heard the rustling of hay, and well understood the reason why Edwards was in the capacity of a teamster.

"Come, Benny," said the hunter: "'twill be no darker to-night, for the moon will rise in an hour."

"Stay!" exclaimed Elizabeth; "it should not be said that you escaped in the presence of the daughter of Judge Temple. Return, Leather-Stocking, and let us retire before you execute your plan."

Natty was about to reply, when the approaching footsteps of the jailer announced the necessity of his immediate return. He had barely time to regain his feet, and to conceal the hole with the bedclothes, across which Benjamin very opportunely fell, before the key was turned, and the door of the apartment opened.

"Isn't Miss Temple ready to go?" said the civil jailer; "it's the usual hour for locking up."

"I follow you, sir," returned Elizabeth "good-night, Leather-Stocking."

"It's a fine grain, gal, and I think twill carry lead further than common. I am getting old, and can't follow up the game with the step I used to could."

Miss Temple waved her hand for silence, and preceded Louisa and the keeper from the apartment. The man turned the key once, and observed that he would return and secure his prisoners, when he had lighted the ladies to the street. Accordingly they parted at the door of the building, when the jailer retired to his dungeons, and the ladies walked, with throbbing hearts, toward the corner.

"Now the Leather-Stocking refuses the money," whispered Louisa, "it can all be given to Mr. Edwards, and that added to—"

"Listen!" said Elizabeth; "I hear the rustling of the hay; they are escaping at this moment. Oh! they will be detected instantly!"

By this time they were at the corner, where Edwards and Natty were in the act of drawing the almost helpless body of Benjamin through the aperture. The oxen had started back from their hay, and were standing with their heads down the street, leaving room for the party to act in.

"Throw the hay into the cart," said Edwards, "or they will suspect how it has been done. Quick, that they may not see it."

Natty had just returned from executing this order, when the light of the keeper's candle shone through the hole, and instantly his voice was heard in the jail exclaiming for his prisoners.

"What is to be done now?" said Edwards; "this drunken fellow will cause our detection, and we have not a moment to spare."

"Who's drunk, ye lubber?" muttered the steward.

"A break-jail! a break-jail!" shouted five or six voices from within.

"We must leave him," said Edwards.

"'Twouldn't be kind, lad," returned Natty; "he took half the disgrace of the stocks on himself to-day, and the creatur' has feeling."

At this moment two or three men were heard issuing from the door of the "Bold Dragoon," and among them the voice of Billy Kirby.

"There's no moon yet," cried the wood-chopper; "but it's a clear night. Come, who's for home? Hark! what a rumpus they're kicking up in the jail—here's go and see what it's about."

"We shall be lost," said Edwards, "if we don't drop this man."

At that instant Elizabeth moved close to him, and said rapidly, in a low voice:

"Lay him in the cart, and start the oxen; no one will look there."

"There's a woman's quickness in the thought," said the youth.

The proposition was no sooner made than executed. The steward was seated on the hay, and enjoined to hold his peace and apply the goad that was placed in his hand, while the oxen were urged on. So soon as this arrangement was completed, Edwards and the hunter stole along the houses for a short distance, when they disappeared through an opening that led into the rear of the buildings.

The oxen were in brisk motion, and presently the cries of pursuit were heard in the street. The ladies quickened their pace, with a wish to escape the crowd of constables and idlers that were approaching, some execrating, and some laughing at the exploit of the prisoners. In the confusion, the voice of Kirby was plainly distinguishable above all the others, shouting and swearing that he would have the fugitives, threatening to bring back Natty in one pocket, and Benjamin in the other.

"Spread yourselves, men," he cried, as he passed the ladies, his heavy feet sounding along the street like the tread of a dozen; "spread yourselves; to the mountains; they'll be in the mountains in a quarter of an hour, and then look out for a long rifle."

His cries were echoed from twenty mouths, for not only the jail but the taverns had sent forth their numbers, some earnest in the pursuit, and others joining it as in sport.

As Elizabeth turned in at her father's gate she saw the wood-chopper stop at the cart, when she gave Benjamin up for lost. While they were hurrying up the walk, two figures, stealing cautiously but quickly under the shades of the trees, met the eyes of the ladies, and in a moment Edwards and the hunter crossed their path.

"Miss Temple, I may never see you again," exclaimed the youth; "let me thank you for all your kindness; you do not, cannot know my motives."

"Fly! fly!" cried Elizabeth; "the village is alarmed. Do not be found conversing with me at such a moment, and in these grounds."

"Nay, I must speak, though detection were certain."

"Your retreat to the bridge is already cut off; before you can gain the wood your pursuers will be there. If—"

"If what?" cried the youth. "Your advice has saved me once already; I will follow it to death."

"The street is now silent and vacant," said Elizabeth, after a pause; "cross it, and you will find my father's boat in the lake. It would be easy to land from it where you please in the hills."

"But Judge Temple might complain of the trespass."

"His daughter shall be accountable, sir."

The youth uttered something in a low voice, that was heard only by Elizabeth, and turned to execute what she had suggested. As they were separating, Natty approached the females, and said:

"You'll remember the canister of powder, children. Them beavers must be had, and I and the pups be getting old; we want the best of ammunition."

"Come, Natty," said Edwards, impatiently.

"Coming, lad, coming. God bless you, young ones, both of ye, for ye mean well and kindly to the old man."

The ladies paused until they had lost sight of the retreating figures, when they immediately entered the mansion-house.

While this scene was passing in the walk, Kirby had overtaken the cart, which was his own, and had been driven by Edwards, without asking the owner, from the place where the patient oxen usually stood at evening, waiting the pleasure of their master.

"Woa—come hither, Golden," he cried; "why, how come you off the end of the bridge, where I left you, dummies?"

"Heave ahead," muttered Benjamin, giving a random blow with his lash, that alighted on the shoulder of the other.

"Who the devil be you?" cried Billy, turning round in surprise, but unable to distinguish, in the dark, the hard visage that was just peering over the cart-rails.

"Who be I? why, I'm helmsman aboard of this here craft d'ye see, and a straight wake I'm making of it. Ay, ay! I've got the bridge right ahead, and the bilboes dead aft: I calls that good steerage, boy. Heave ahead."

"Lay your lash in the right spot, Mr. Benny Pump," said the wood-chopper, "or I'll put you in the palm of my hand and box your ears. Where be you going with my team?"

"Team!"

"Ay, my cart and oxen."

"Why, you must know, Master Kirby, that the Leather-Stocking and I—that's Benny Pump—you knows Ben?—well, Benny and I—no, me and Benny; dam'me if I know how 'tis; but some of us are bound after a cargo of beaver-skins, d'ye see, so we've pressed the cart to ship them 'ome in. I say, Master Kirby, what a lubberly oar you pull—you handle an oar, boy, pretty much as a cow would a musket, or a lady would a marling-spike."

Billy had discovered the state of the steward's mind, and he walked for some time alongside of the cart, musing with himself, when he took the goad from Benjamin (who fell back on the hay and was soon asleep) and drove his cattle down the street, over the bridge, and up the mountain, toward a clearing in which he was to work the next day, without any other interruption than a few hasty questions from parties of the constables.

Elizabeth stood for an hour at the window of her room, and saw the torches of the pursuers gliding along the side of the mountain, and heard their shouts and alarms; but, at the end of that time, the last party returned, wearied and disappointed, and the village became as still as when she issued from the gate on her mission to the jail.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

"And I could weep"—  
th' Oneida chief  
His descant wildly thus begun—  
"But that I may not stain with grief  
The death-song of my father's son."  
—Gertrude of Wyoming.

It was yet early on the following morning, when Elizabeth and Louisa met by appointment, and proceeded to the store of Monsieur Le Quoi, in order to redeem the pledge the former had given to the Leather-Stocking. The people were again assembling for the business of the day, but the hour was too soon for a crowd, and the ladies found the place in possession of its polite owner, Billy Kirby, one female customer, and the boy who did the duty of helper or clerk.

Monsieur Le Quoi was perusing a packet of letters with manifest delight, while the wood-chopper, with one hand thrust in his bosom, and the other in the folds of his jacket, holding an axe under his right arm, stood sympathizing in the Frenchman's pleasure with good-natured interest. The freedom of manners that prevailed in the new settlements commonly levelled all difference in rank, and with it, frequently, all considerations of education and intelligence. At the time the ladies entered the store, they were unseen by the owner, who was saying to Kirby:

"Ah! ha! Monsieur Beel, dis lettair mak me de most happi of mans. Ah! ma chère France! I vill see you again."

"I rejoice, monsieur, at anything that contributes to your happiness," said Elizabeth, "but hope we are not going to lose you entirely."

The complaisant shopkeeper changed the language to French and recounted rapidly to Elizabeth his hopes of being permitted to return to his own country. Habit had, however, so far altered the manners of this pliable personage, that he continued to serve the wood-chopper, who was in quest of some tobacco, while he related to his more gentle visitor the happy change that had taken place in the dispositions of his own countrymen.

The amount of it all was, that Mr. Le Quoi, who had fled from his own country more through terror than because he was offensive to the ruling powers in France, had succeeded at length in getting an assurance that his return to the West Indies would be unnoticed; and the Frenchman, who had sunk into the character of a country shopkeeper with so much grace, was about to emerge again from his obscurity into his proper level in society.

We need not repeat the civil things that passed between the parties on this occasion, nor recount the endless repetitions of sorrow that the delighted Frenchman expressed at being compelled to quit the society of Miss Temple. Elizabeth took an opportunity, during this expenditure of polite expressions, to purchase the powder privately of the boy, who bore the generic appellation of Jonathan. Before they parted, however, Mr. Le Quoi, who seemed to think that he had not said enough, solicited the honor of a private interview with the heiress, with a gravity in his air that announced the importance of the subject. After conceding the favor, and appointing a more favorable time for the meeting, Elizabeth succeeded in getting out of the store, into which the countrymen now began to enter, as usual, where they met with the same attention and *bien seance* as formerly.

Elizabeth and Louisa pursued their walk as far as the bridge in profound silence; but when they reached that place the latter stopped, and appeared anxious to utter something that her diffidence suppressed.

"Are you ill, Louisa?" exclaimed Miss Temple; "had we not better return, and seek another opportunity to meet the old man?"

"Not ill, but terrified. Oh! I never, never can go on that hill again with you only. I am not equal to it, in deed I am not."

This was an unexpected declaration to Elizabeth, who, although she experienced no idle apprehension of a danger that no longer existed, felt most sensitively all the delicacy of maiden modesty. She stood for some time, deeply reflecting within herself; but, sensible it was a time for action instead of reflection, she struggled to shake off her hesitation, and replied, firmly:

"Well, then it must be done by me alone. There is no other than yourself to be trusted, or poor old Leather-Stocking will be discovered. Wait for me in the edge of these woods, that at least I may not be seen strolling in the hills by myself just now, One would not wish to create remarks, Louisa—if—if—You will wait for me, dear girl?"

"A year, in sight of the village, Miss Temple," returned the agitated Louisa, "but do not, do not ask me to go on that hill."

Elizabeth found that her companion was really unable to proceed, and they completed their arrangement by posting Louisa out of the observation of the people who occasionally passed, but nigh the road, and in plain view of the whole valley. Miss Temple then proceeded alone. She ascended the road which has been so often mentioned in our narrative, with an elastic and firm step, fearful that the delay in the store of Mr. Le Quoi, and the time necessary for reaching the summit, would prevent her being punctual to the appointment. Whenever she pressed an opening in the bushes, she would pause for breath, or, perhaps, drawn from her pursuit by the picture at her feet, would linger a moment to gaze at the beauties of the valley. The long drought had, however, changed its coat of verdure to a hue of brown, and, though the same localities were there, the view wanted the lively and cheering aspect of early summer. Even the heavens seemed to share in the dried appearance of the earth, for the sun was concealed by a haziness in the atmosphere, which looked like a thin smoke without a particle of moisture, if such a thing were possible. The blue sky was scarcely to be seen, though now, and then there was a faint lighting up in spots through which masses of rolling vapor could be discerned gathering around the horizon, as if nature were struggling to collect her floods for the relief of man. The very atmosphere that Elizabeth inhaled was hot and dry, and by the time she reached the point where the course led her from the highway she experienced a sensation like suffocation. But, disregarding her feelings, she hastened to execute her mission, dwelling on nothing but the disappointment, and even the helplessness, the hunter would experience without her aid.

On the summit of the mountain which Judge Temple had named the "Vision," a little spot had been cleared, in order that a better view might be obtained of the village and the valley. At this point Elizabeth understood the hunter she was to meet him; and thither she urged her way, as expeditiously as the difficulty of the ascent, and the impediment of a forest, in a state of nature, would admit. Numberless were the fragments of rocks, trunks of fallen trees, and branches, with which she had to contend; but every difficulty vanished before her resolution, and, by her own watch, she stood on the desired spot several minutes before the appointed hour.

After resting a moment on the end of a log, Miss Temple cast a glance about her in quest of her old friend, but he was evidently not in the clearing; she arose and walked around its skirts, examining every place where she thought it probable Natty might deem it prudent to conceal himself. Her search was fruitless; and, after exhausting not only herself, but her conjectures, in efforts to discover or imagine his situation, she ventured to trust her voice in that solitary place.

"Natty! Leather-Stocking! old man!" she called aloud, in every direction; but no answer was given, excepting the reverberations of her own clear tones, as they were echoed in the parched forest.

Elizabeth approached the brow of the mountain, where a faint cry, like the noise produced by striking the hand against the mouth, at the same time that the breath is strongly exhaled, was heard answering to her own voice. Not doubting in the least that it was the Leather-Stocking lying in wait for her, and who gave that signal to indicate the place where he was to be found, Elizabeth descended for near a hundred feet, until she gained a little natural terrace, thinly scattered with trees, that grew in the fissures of the rocks, which were covered by a scanty soil. She had advanced to the edge of this platform, and was gazing over the perpendicular precipice that formed its face, when a rustling among the dry leaves near her drew her eyes in another direction. Our heroine certainly was startled by the object that she then saw, but a moment restored her self-possession, and she advanced firmly, and with some interest in her manner, to the spot.

Mohegan was seated on the trunk of a fallen oak, with his tawny visage turned toward her, and his eyes fixed on her face with an expression of wildness and fire, that would have terrified a less resolute female. His blanket had fallen from his shoulders, and was lying in folds around him, leaving his breast, arms, and most of his body bare. The medallion of Washington reposed on his chest, a badge of distinction that Elizabeth well knew he only produced on great and solemn occasions. But the whole appearance of the aged chief was more studied than common, and in some particulars it was terrific. The long black hair was plaited on his head, falling away, so as to expose his high forehead and piercing eyes. In the enormous incisions of his ears were entwined ornaments of silver, beads, and porcupine's quills, mingled in a rude taste, and after the Indian fashions. A large drop, composed of similar materials, was suspended from the cartilage of his nose, and, falling below his lips, rested on his chin. Streaks of red paint crossed his wrinkled brow, and were traced down his cheeks, with such variations in the lines as caprice or custom suggested. His body was also colored in the same manner; the whole exhibiting an Indian warrior prepared for some event of more than usual moment.

"John! how fare you, worthy John?" said Elizabeth, as she approached him; "you have long been a stranger in the village. You promised me a willow basket, and I have long had a shirt of calico in readiness for you."

The Indian looked steadily at her for some time without answering, and then, shaking his head, he replied, in his low, guttural tones:

"John's hand can make baskets no more—he wants no shirt."

"But if he should, he will know where to come for it," returned Miss Temple. "Indeed old John. I feel as if you had a natural right to order what you will from us."

"Daughter," said the Indian, "listen: Six times ten hot summers have passed since John was young tall like a pine; straight like the bullet of Hawk-eye, strong as all buffalo; spry as the cat of the mountain. He was strong, and a warrior like the Young Eagle. If his tribe wanted to track the Maquas for many suns, the eye of Chingachgook found the print of their moccasins. If the people feasted and were glad, as they counted the scalps of their enemies, it was on his pole they hung. If the squaws cried because there was no meat for their children, he was the first in the chase. His bullet was swifter than the deer. Daughter, then Chingachgook struck his tomahawk into the trees; it was to tell the lazy ones where to find him and the Mingoes—but he made no baskets."

"Those times have gone by, old warrior," returned Elizabeth; "since then your people have disappeared, and, in place of chasing your enemies, you have learned to fear God and to live at peace."

"Stand here, daughter, where you can see the great spring, the wigwams of your father, and the land on the crooked river. John was young when his tribe gave away the country, in council, from where the blue mountain stands above the water, to where the Susquehanna is hid by the trees. All this, and all that grew in it, and all that walked over it, and all that fed there, they gave to the Fire-eater—for they loved him. He was strong, and they were women, and he helped them. No Delaware would kill a deer that ran in his woods, nor stop a bird that flew over his land; for it was his. Has John lived in peace? Daughter, since John was young, he has seen the white man from Frontinac come down on his white brothers at Albany and fight. Did they fear God? He has seen his English and his American fathers burying their tomahawks in each other's brains, for this very land. Did they fear God, and live in peace? He has seen the land pass away from the Fire-eater, and his children, and the child of his child, and a new chief set over the country. Did they live in peace who did this? did they fear God?"

"Such is the custom of the whites, John. Do not the Delawares fight, and exchange their lands for powder, and blankets, and merchandise?"

The Indian turned his dark eyes on his companion, and kept them there with a scrutiny that alarmed her a little.

"Where are the blankets and merchandise that bought the right of the Fire-eater?" he replied in a more animated voice; "are they with him in his wigwam? Did they say to him, Brother, sell us your land, and take this gold, this silver, these blankets, these rifles, or even this rum? No; they tore it from him, as a scalp is torn from an enemy; and they that did it looked not behind them, to see whether he lived or died. Do such men live in peace and fear the Great Spirit?"

"But you hardly understand the circumstances," said Elizabeth, more embarrassed than she would own, even to herself. "If you knew our laws and customs better, you would Judge differently of our acts. Do not believe evil of my father, old Mohegan, for he is



just and good.”

“The brother of Miquon is good, and he will do right. I have said it to Hawk-eye—I have said it to the Young Eagle that the brother of Miquon would do justice.”

“Whom call you the Young Eagle?” said Elizabeth, averting her face from the gaze of the Indian, as she asked the question; “whence comes he, and what are his rights?”

“Has my daughter lived so long with him to ask this question?” returned the Indian warily. “Old age freezes up the blood, as the frosts cover the great spring in winter; but youth keeps the streams of the blood open like a sun in the time of blossoms. The Young Eagle has eyes; had he no tongue?”

The loveliness to which the old warrior alluded was in no degree diminished by his allegorical speech; for the blushes of the maiden who listened covered her burning cheeks till her dark eyes seemed to glow with their reflection; but, after struggling a moment with shame, she laughed, as if unwilling to understand him seriously, and replied in pleasantry:

“Not to make me the mistress of his secret. He is too much of a Delaware to tell his secret thoughts to a woman.”

“Daughter, the Great Spirit made your father with a white skin, and he made mine with a red; but he colored both their hearts with blood. When young, it is swift and warm; but when old, it is still and cold. Is there difference below the skin? No. Once John had a woman. She was the mother of so many sons—he raised his hand with three fingers elevated—and she had daughters that would have made the young Delawares happy. She was kind, daughter, and what I said she did. You have different fashions; but do you think John did not love the wife of his youth—the mother of his children?”

“And what has become of your family, John—your wife and your children?” asked Elizabeth, touched by the Indian's manner.

“Where is the ice that covered the great spring? It is melted, and gone with the waters. John has lived till all his people have left him for the land of spirits; his time has come, and he is ready.”

Mohegan dropped his head in his blanket, and sat in silence. Miss Temple knew not what to say. She wished to draw the thoughts of the old warrior from his gloomy recollections, but there was a dignity in his sorrow, and in his fortitude, that repressed her efforts to speak. After a long pause, however, she renewed the discourse by asking:

“Where is the Leather-Stocking, John? I have brought this canister of powder at his request; but he is nowhere to be seen. Will you take charge of it, and see it delivered?”

The Indian raised his head slowly and looked earnestly at the gift, which she put into his hand.

“This is the great enemy of my nation. Without this, when could the white man drive the Delawares? Daughter, the Great Spirit gave your fathers to know how to make guns and powder, that they might sweep the Indians from the land. There will soon be no red-skin in the country. When John has gone, the last will leave these hills, and his family will be dead.” The aged warrior stretched his body forward, leaning an elbow on his knee, and appeared to be taking a parting look at the objects of the vale, which were still visible through the misty atmosphere, though the air seemed to thicken at each moment around Miss Temple, who became conscious of an increased difficulty of respiration. The eye of Mohegan changed gradually from its sorrowful expression to a look of wildness that might be supposed to border on the inspiration of a prophet, as he continued: “But he will go on to the country where his fathers have met. The game shall be plenty as the Ash in the lakes. No woman shall cry for meat: no Mingo can ever come The chase shall be for children; and all just red men shall live together as brothers.”

“John! this is not the heaven of a Christian,” cried Miss Temple; “you deal now in the superstition of your forefathers.”

“Fathers! sons!” said Mohegan, with firmness.—“all gone—all gone!—have no son but the Young Eagle, and he has the blood of a white man.”

“Tell me, John,” said Elizabeth, willing to draw his thoughts to other subjects, and at the same time yielding to her own powerful interest in the youth; “who is this Mr. Edwards? why are you so fond of him, and whence does he come?”

The Indian started at the question, which evidently recalled his recollection to earth. Taking her hand, he drew Miss Temple to a seat beside him, and pointed to the country beneath them.

“See, daughter,” he said, directing her looks toward the north; “as far as your young eyes can see, it was the land of his. But immense volumes of smoke at that moment rolled over their heath, and, whirling in the eddies formed by the mountains, interposed a barrier to their sight, while he was speaking. Startled by this circumstance, Miss Temple sprang to her feet, and, turning her eyes toward the summit of the mountain, she beheld it covered by a similar canopy, while a roaring sound was heard in the forest above her like the rushing of winds.

“What means it, John?” she exclaimed: “we are enveloped in smoke, and I feel a heat like the glow of a furnace.”

Before the Indian could reply, a voice was heard crying In the woods: “John! where are you, old Mohegan! the woods are on fire, and you have but a minute for escape.”

The chief put his hand before his mouth, and, making it lay on his lips, produced the kind of noise that had attracted Elizabeth to the place, when a quick and hurried step was heard dashing through the dried underbrush and bushes, and presently Edwards rushed to his side, with horror an every feature.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Love rules the court, the camp, the grove."  
—Lay of the Last Minstrel.

"It would have been sad, indeed, to lose you in such manner, my old friend," said Oliver, catching his breath for utterance. "Up and away! even now we may be too late; the flames are circling round the point of the rock below, and, unless we can pass there, our only chance must be over the precipice. Away! away! shake off your apathy, John; now is the time of need."

Mohegan pointed toward Elizabeth, who, forgetting her danger, had sunk back to a projection of the rock as soon as she recognized the sounds of Edwards' voice, and said with something like awakened animation:

"Save her—leave John to die."

"Her! whom mean you?" cried the youth, turning quickly to the place the other indicated; but when he saw the figure of Elizabeth bending toward him in an attitude that powerfully spoke terror, blended with reluctance to meet him in such a place, the shock deprived him of speech.

"Miss Temple!" he cried, when he found words; "you here! is such a death reserved for you!"

"No, no, no—no death, I hope, for any of us, Mr. Edwards," she replied, endeavoring to speak calmly; there is smoke, but no fire to harm us. "Let us endeavor to retire."

"Take my arm," said Edwards; "there must be an opening in some direction for your retreat. Are you equal to the effort?"

"Certainly. You surely magnify the danger, Mr. Edwards. Lead me out the way you came."

"I will—I will," cried the youth, with a kind of hysterical utterance. "No, no—there is no danger—I have alarmed you unnecessarily."

"But shall we leave the Indian—can we leave him, as he says, to die?"

An expression of painful emotion crossed the face of the young man; he stopped and cast a longing look at Mohegan but, dragging his companion after him, even against her will, he pursued his way with enormous strides toward the pass by which he had just entered the circle of flame.

"Do not regard him," he said, in those tones that denote a desperate calmness; "he is used to the woods, and such scenes; and he will escape up the mountain—over the rock—or he can remain where he is in safety."

"You thought not so this moment, Edwards! Do not leave him there to meet with such a death," cried Elizabeth, fixing a look on the countenance of her conductor that seemed to distrust his sanity.

"An Indian born! who ever heard of an Indian dying by fire? An Indian cannot burn; the idea is ridiculous. Hasten, hasten, Miss Temple, or the smoke may incommode you."

"Edwards! your look, your eye, terrifies me! Tell me the danger; is it greater than it seems? I am equal to any trial."

"If we reach the point of yon rock before that sheet of fire, we are safe, Miss Temple," exclaimed the young man in a voice that burst without the bounds of his forced composure. "Fly! the struggle is for life!"

The place of the interview between Miss Temple and the Indian has already been described as one of those plat forms of rock, which form a sort of terrace in the mountains of that country, and the face of it, we have said, was both high and perpendicular. Its shape was nearly a natural arc, the ends of which blended with the mountain, at points where its sides were less abrupt in their descent. It was round one of these terminations of the sweep of the rock that Edwards had ascended, and it was toward the same place that he urged Elizabeth to a desperate exertion of speed.

Immense clouds of white smoke had been pouring over the summit of the mountain, and had concealed the approach and ravages of the element; but a crackling sound drew the eyes of Miss Temple, as she flew over the ground supported by the young man, toward the outline of smoke where she already perceived the waving flames shooting forward from the vapor, now flaring high in the air, and then bending to the earth, seeming to light into combustion every stick and shrub on which they breathed. The sight aroused them to redoubled efforts; but, unfortunately, a collection of the tops of trees, old and dried, lay directly across their course; and at the very moment when both had thought their safety insured, the warm current of the air swept a forked tongue of flame across the pile, which lighted at the touch; and when they reached the spot, the flying pair were opposed by the surly roaring of a body of fire, as if a furnace were glowing in their path. They recoiled from the heat, and stood on a point of the rock, gazing in a stupor at the flames which were spreading rapidly down the mountain, whose side, too, became a sheet of living fire. It was dangerous for one clad in the light and airy dress of Elizabeth to approach even the vicinity of the raging element; and those flowing robes, that gave such softness and grace to her form, seemed now to be formed for the instruments of her destruction.

The villagers were accustomed to resort to that hill, in quest of timber and fuel; in procuring which, it was their usage to take only the bodies of the trees, leaving the tops and branches to decay under the operations of the weather. Much of the hill was, consequently, covered with such light fuel, which, having been scorched under the sun for the last two months, was ignited with a touch. Indeed, in some cases, there did not appear to be any contact between the fire and these piles, but the flames seemed to dart from heap to heap, as the fabulous fire of the temple is represented to reillumine its neglected lamp.

There was beauty as well as terror in the sight, and Edwards and Elizabeth stood viewing the progress of the desolation, with a strange mixture of horror and interest. The former, however, shortly roused himself to new exertions, and, drawing his companion after

him, they skirted the edge of the smoke, the young man penetrating frequently into its dense volumes in search of a passage, but in every instance without success. In this manner they proceeded in a semicircle around the upper part of the terrace, until arriving at the verge of the precipice opposite to the point where Edwards had ascended, the horrid conviction burst on both, at the same instant, that they were completely encircled by fire. So long as a single pass up or down the mountain was unexplored, there was hope: but when retreat seemed to be absolutely impracticable, the horror of their situation broke upon Elizabeth as powerfully as if she had hitherto considered the danger light.

"This mountain is doomed to be fatal to me!" she whispered; "we shall find our graves on it!"

"Say not so, Miss Temple; there is yet hope," returned the youth, in the same tone, while the vacant expression of his eye contradicted his words; "let us return to the point of the rock—there is—there must be—some place about it where we can descend.

"Lead me there," exclaimed Elizabeth; "let us leave no effort untried." She did not wait for his compliance, but turning, retraced her steps to the brow of the precipice, murmuring to herself, in suppressed, hysterical sobs, "My father! my poor, my distracted father!"

Edwards was by her side in an instant, and with aching eyes he examined every fissure in the crags in quest of some opening that might offer facilities for flight. But the smooth, even surface of the rocks afforded hardly a resting-place for a foot, much less those continued projections which would have been necessary for a descent of nearly a hundred feet. Edwards was not slow in feeling the conviction that this hope was also futile, and, with a kind of feverish despair that still urged him to action, he turned to some new expedient.

"There is nothing left, Miss Temple," he said, "but to lower you from this place to the rock beneath. If Natty were here, or even that Indian could be roused, their ingenuity and long practice would easily devise methods to do it; but I am a child at this moment in everything but daring. Where shall I find means? This dress of mine is so light, and there is so little of it—then the blanket of Mohegan; we must try—we must try—anything is better than to see you a victim to such a death!"

"And what will become of you?" said Elizabeth. "In deed, indeed, neither you nor John must be sacrificed to my safety."

He heard her not, for he was already by the side of Mohegan, who yielded his blanket without a question, retaining his seat with Indian dignity and composure, though his own situation was even more critical than that of the others. The blanket was cut into shreds, and the fragments fastened together: the loose linen jacket of the youth and the light muslin shawl of Elizabeth were attached to them, and the whole thrown over the rocks with the rapidity of lightning; but the united Pieces did not reach half-way to the bottom.

"It will not do—it will not do!" cried Elizabeth; "for me there is no hope! The fire comes slowly, but certainly. See, it destroys the very earth before it!"

Had the flames spread on that rock with half the quickness with which they leaped from bush to tree in other parts of the mountain, our painful task would have soon ended; for they would have consumed already the captives they inclosed. But the peculiarity of their situation afforded Elizabeth and her companion the respite of which they had availed themselves to make the efforts we have recorded.

The thin covering of earth on the rock supported but a scanty and faded herbage, and most of the trees that had found root in the fissures had already died, during the intense heats of preceding summers. Those which still retained the appearance of life bore a few dry and withered leaves, while the others were merely the wrecks of pines, oaks, and maples. No better materials to feed the fire could be found, had there been a communication with the flames; but the ground was destitute of the brush that led the destructive element, like a torrent, over the remainder of the hill. As auxiliary to this scarcity of fuel, one of the large springs which abound in that country gushed out of the side of the ascent above, and, after creeping sluggishly along the level land, saturating the mossy covering of the rock with moisture, it swept around the base of the little cone that formed the pinnacle of the mountain, and, entering the canopy of smoke near one of the terminations of the terrace, found its way to the lake, not by dashing from rock to rock, but by the secret channels of the earth. It would rise to the surface, here and there, in the wet seasons, but in the droughts of summer it was to be traced only by the bogs and moss that announced the proximity of water. When the fire reached this barrier, it was compelled to pause, until a concentration of its heat could overcome the moisture, like an army awaiting the operations of a battering train, to open its way to desolation.

That fatal moment seemed now to have arrived, for the hissing steams of the spring appeared to be nearly exhausted, and the moss of the rocks was already curling under the intense heat, while fragments of bark, that yet clung to the dead trees, began to separate from their trunks, and fall to the ground in crumbling masses. The air seemed quivering with rays of heat, which might be seen playing along the parched stems of the trees. There were moments when dark clouds of smoke would sweep along the little terrace; and, as the eye lost its power, the other senses contributed to give effect to the fearful horror of the scene. At such moments, the roaring of the flames, the crackling of the furious element, with the tearing of falling branches, and occasionally the thundering echoes of some falling tree, united to alarm the victims. Of the three, however, the youth appeared much the most agitated. Elizabeth, having relinquished entirely the idea of escape, was fast obtaining that resigned composure with which the most delicate of her sex are sometimes known to meet unavoidable evils; while Mohegan, who was much nearer to the danger, maintained his seat with the invincible resignation of an Indian warrior. Once or twice the eye of the aged chief, which was ordinarily fixed in the direction of the distant hills, turned toward the young pair, who seemed doomed to so early a death, with a slight indication of pity crossing his composed features, but it would immediately revert again to its former gaze, as if already looking into the womb of futurity. Much of the time he was chanting a kind of low dirge in the Delaware tongue, using the deep and remarkable guttural tones of his people.

"At such a moment, Mr. Edwards, all earthly distinctions end," whispered Elizabeth; "persuade John to move nearer to us—let us die together."

"I cannot—he will not stir," returned the youth, in the same horribly still tones. "He considers this as the happiest moment of his life, he is past seventy, and has been decaying rapidly for some time; he received some injury in chasing that unlucky deer, too, on the lake, Oh! Miss Temple, that was an unlucky chase, indeed! it has led, I fear, to this awful scene."

The smile of Elizabeth was celestial. "Why name such a trifle now?—at this moment the heart is dead to all earthly emotions!"

"If anything could reconcile a man to this death," cried the youth, "it would be to meet it in such company!"

"Talk not so, Edwards; talk not so," interrupted Miss Temple. "I am unworthy of it, and it is unjust to your self. We must die; yes—we must die—it is the will of God, and let us endeavor to submit like his own children."

"Die!" the youth rather shrieked than exclaimed, "no—no—no—there must yet be hope—you, at least, must-not, shall not die."

"In what way can we escape?" asked Elizabeth, pointing with a look of heavenly composure toward the fire "Observe! the flame is crossing the barrier of wet ground—it comes slowly, Edwards, but surely. Ah! see! the tree! the tree is already lighted!"

Her words were too true. The heat of the conflagration had at length overcome the resistance of the spring, and the fire was slowly stealing along the half-dried moss; while a dead pine kindled with the touch of a forked flame, that, for a moment, wreathed around the stem of the tree, as it whined, in one of its evolutions, under the influence of the air. The effect was instantaneous, The flames danced along the parched trunk of the pine like lightning quivering on a chain, and immediately a column of living fire was raging on the terrace. It soon spread from tree to tree, and the scene was evidently drawing to a close. The log on which Mohegan was seated lighted at its further end, and the Indian appeared to be surrounded by fire. Still he was unmoved. As his body was unprotected, his sufferings must have been great; but his fortitude was superior to all. His voice could yet be heard even in the midst of these horrors. Elizabeth turned her head from the sight, and faced the valley Furious eddies of wind were created by the heat, and, just at the moment, the canopy of fiery smoke that overhung the valley was cleared away, leaving a distinct view of the peaceful village beneath them. "My father!—my father!" shrieked Elizabeth "Oh! this—surely might have been spared me—but I submit."

The distance was not so great but the figure of Judge Temple could be seen, standing in his own grounds, and apparently contemplating, in perfect unconsciousness of the danger of his child, the mountain in flames. This sight was still more painful than the approaching danger; and Elizabeth again faced the hill.

"My intemperate warmth has done this!" cried Edwards, in the accents of despair. "If I had possessed but a moiety of your heavenly resignation, Miss Temple, all might yet have been well."

"Name it not—name it not," she said. "It is now of no avail. We must die, Edwards, we must die—let us do so as Christians. But—no—you may yet escape, perhaps. Your dress is not so fatal as mine. Fly! Leave me, An opening may yet be found for you, possibly—certainly it is worth the effort. Fly! leave me—but stay! You will see my father! my poor, my bereaved father! Say to him, then, Edwards, say to him, all that can appease his anguish. Tell him that I died happy and collected; that I have gone to my beloved mother; that the hours of this life are nothing when balanced in the scales of eternity. Say how we shall meet again. And say," she continued, dropping her voice, that had risen with her feelings, as if conscious of her worldly weakness, "how clear, how very dear, was my love for him; that it was near, too near, to my love for God."

The youth listened to her touching accents, but moved not. In a moment he found utterance, and replied:

"And is it me that you command to leave you! to leave you on the edge of the grave? Oh! Miss Temple, how little have you known me!" he cried, dropping on his knees at her feet, and gathering her flowing robe in his arms as if to shield her from the flames. "I have been driven to the woods in despair, but your society has tamed the lion within me. If I have wasted my time in degradation, 'twas you that charmed me to it. If I have forgotten my name and family, your form supplied the place of memory. If I have forgotten my wrongs, 'twas you that taught me charity. No—no—dearest Elizabeth, I may die with you, but I can never leave you!"

Elizabeth moved not, nor answered. It was plain that her thoughts had been raised from the earth, The recollection of her father, and her regrets at their separation, had been mellowed by a holy sentiment, that lifted her above the level of earthly things, and she was fast losing the weakness of her sex in the near view of eternity. But as she listened to these words she became once more woman. She struggled against these feelings, and smiled, as she thought she was shaking off the last lingering feeling of nature, when the world, and all its seductions, rushed again to her heart, with the sounds of a human, voice, crying in piercing tones:

"Gal! where be ye, gal! gladden the heart of an old man, if ye yet belong to 'arth!"

"Hist!" said Elizabeth; "'tis the Leather-Stocking; he seeks me!"

"'Tis Natty!" shouted Edwards, "and we may yet be saved!"

A wide and circling flame glared on their eyes for a moment, even above the fire of the woods, and a loud report followed.

"'Tis the canister, 'tis the powder," cried the same voice, evidently approaching them. "'Tis the canister, and the precious child is lost."

At the next instant Natty rushed through the steams of the spring, and appeared on the terrace, without his deerskin cap, his hair burnt to his head, his shirt, of country check, black and filled with holes, and his red features of a deeper color than ever, by the heat he had encountered.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Even from the land of shadows, now  
My father's awful ghost appears."  
—Gertrude Of Wyoming.

For an hour after Louisa Grant was left by Miss Temple, in the situation already mentioned, she continued in feverish anxiety, awaiting the return of her friend. But as the time passed by without the reappearance of Elizabeth, the terror of Louisa gradually increased, until her alarmed fancy had conjured every species of danger that appertained to the woods, excepting the one that really existed. The heavens had become obscured by degrees, and vast volumes of smoke were pouring over the valley; but the thoughts of Louisa were still recurring to beasts, without dreaming of the real cause for apprehension. She was stationed in the edge of the low pines and chestnuts that succeed the first or large growth of the forest, and directly above the angle where the highway turned from the straight course to the village, and ascended the mountain laterally. Consequently, she commanded a view, not only of the valley, but of the road beneath her. The few travellers that passed, she observed, were engaged in earnest conversation, and frequently raised their eyes to the hill, and at length she saw the people leaving the court house, and gazing upward also. While under the influence of the alarm excited by such unusual movements, reluctant to go, and yet fearful to remain, Louisa was startled by the low, cracking, but cautious treads of some one approaching through the bushes. She was on the eve of flight, when Natty emerged from the cover, and stood at her side. The old man laughed as he shook her kindly by a hand that was passive with fear.

"I am glad to meet you here, child," he said; "for the back of the mountain is a-fire, and it would be dangerous to go up it now, till it has been burnt over once, and the dead wood is gone. There's a foolish man, the comrade of that varmint who has given me all this trouble, digging for ore on the east side. I told him that the kearless fellows, who thought to catch a practysed hunter in the woods after dark, had thrown the lighted pine-knots in the brush, and that 'twould kindle like tow, and warned him to leave the hill. But he was set upon his business, and nothing short of Providence could move him, if he isn't burnt and buried in a grave of his own digging, he's made of salamanders. Why, what ails the child? You look as skeary as if you'd seed more painters. I wish there were more to be found! they'd count up faster than the beaver. But where's the good child with a bad father? Did she forget her promise to the old man?"

"The hill! the hill!" shrieked Louisa; "she seeks you on the hill with the powder!"

Natty recoiled several feet at this unexpected intelligence.

"The Lord of Heaven have mercy on her! She's on the Vision, and that's a sheet of fire agin' this. Child, if ye love the dear one, and hope to find a friend when ye need it most, to the village, and give the alarm. The men are used to fighting fire, and there may be a chance left, Fly! I bid ye fly! nor stop even for breath."

The Leather-Stocking had no sooner uttered this injunction, than he disappeared in the bushes, and, when last seen by Louisa, was rushing up the mountain, with a speed that none but those who were accustomed to the toil could attain.

"Have I found ye!" the old man exclaimed, when he burst out of the smoke; "God be praised that I have found ye; but follow—there's no time for talking."

"My dress!" said Elizabeth; "it would be fatal to trust myself nearer to the flames in it."

"I bethought me of your flimsy things," cried Natty, throwing loose the folds of a covering buckskin that he carried on his arm, and wrapping her form in it, in such a manner as to envelop her whole person; "now follow, for it's a matter of life and death to us all."

"But John! what will become of John?" cried Edwards; "can we leave the old warrior here to perish?"

The eyes of Natty followed the direction of Edwards' finger, where he beheld the Indian still seated as before, with the very earth under his feet consuming with fire. Without delay the hunter approached the spot, and spoke in Delaware:

"Up and away, Chingachook! will ye stay here to burn, like a Mingo at the stake? The Moravians have teached ye better, I hope; the Lord preserve me if the powder hasn't flashed atween his legs, and the skin of his back is roasting. Will ye come, I say; will ye follow me?"

"Why should Mohegan go?" returned the Indian, gloomily. "He has seen the days of an eagle, and his eye grows dim. He looks on the valley; he looks on the water; he looks in the hunting-grounds—but he sees no Delawares. Every one has a white skin. My fathers say, from the far-off land, Come. My women, my young warriors, my tribe, say, Come. The Great Spirit says, Come. Let Mohegan die."

"But you forget your friend," cried Edwards,

"'Tis useless to talk to an Indian with the death-fit on him, lad," interrupted Natty, who seized the strips of the blanket, and with wonderful dexterity strapped the passive chieftain to his own back; when he turned, and with a strength that seemed to bid defiance, not only to his years, but to his load, he led the way to the point whence he had issued. As they crossed the little terrace of rock, one of the dead trees, that had been tottering for several minutes, fell on the spot where they had stood, and filled the air with its cinders.

Such an event quickened the steps of the party, who followed the Leather-Stocking with the urgency required by the occasion.

"Tread on the soft ground," he cried, when they were in a gloom where sight availed them but little, "and keep in the white smoke; keep the skin close on her, lad; she's a precious one—another will be hard to be found."

Obedient to the hunter's directions, they followed his steps and advice implicitly; and, although the narrow pas sage along the winding of the spring led amid burning logs and falling branches, they happily achieved it in safety. No one but a man long accustomed to the woods could have traced his route through the smoke, in which respiration was difficult, and sight nearly useless;

but the experience of Natty conducted them to an opening through the rocks, where, with a little difficulty, they soon descended to another terrace, and emerged at once into a tolerably clear atmosphere.

The feelings of Edwards and Elizabeth at reaching this spot may be imagined, though not easily described. No one seemed to exult more than their guide, who turned, with Mohegan still lashed to his back, and, laughing in his own manner, said:

"I knowed 'twa the Frenchman's powder, gal; it went so all together; your coarse grain will squib for a minute. The Iroquois had none of the best powder when I went agin' the Canada tribes, under Sir William. Did I ever tell you the story, lad, consarnin' the scrimmage with—"

"For God's sake, tell me nothing now, Natty, until we are entirely safe. Where shall we go next?"

"Why, on the platform of rock over the cave, to be sure; you will be safe enough there, or we'll go Into It, if you be so minded." The young man started, and appeared agitated; but, looking around him with an anxious eye, said quickly:

"Shalt we be safe on the rock? cannot the fire reach us there, too?"

"Can't the boy see?" said Natty, with the coolness of one accustomed to the kind of danger he had just encountered. "Had ye stayed in the place above ten minutes longer, you would both have been in ashes, but here you may stay forever, and no fire can touch you, until they burn the rocks as well as the woods."

With this assurance, which was obviously true, they proceeded to the spot, and Natty deposited his load, placing the Indian on the ground with his back against a fragment of the rocks. Elizabeth sank on the ground, and buried her face in her hands, while her heart was swelling with a variety of conflicting emotions.

"Let me urge you to take a restorative, Miss Temple," said Edwards respectfully; "your frame will sink else."

"Leave me, leave me," she said, raising her beaming eyes for a moment to his; "I feel too much for words! I am grateful, Oliver, for this miraculous escape; and next to my God to you."

Edwards withdrew to the edge of the rock, and shouted:

"Benjamin! where are you, Benjamin?"

A hoarse voice replied, as if from the bowels of the earth:

"Hereaway, master; stowed in this here bit of a hole, which is all the time as hot as the cook's coppers. I'm tired of my berth, d'ye see, and if-so-be that Leather Stocking has got much overhauling to do before he sails after them said beaver I'll go into dock again, and ride out my quarantine, till I can get prottick from the law, and so hold on upon the rest of my 'spaniolas."

"Bring up a glass of water from the spring," continued Edwards, "and throw a little wine in it; hasten, I entreat you!"

"I knows but little of your small drink, Master Oliver," returned the steward, his voice issuing out of the cave into the open air, "and the Jamaikey held out no longer than to take a parting kiss with Billy Kirby, when he anchored me alongside the highway last night, where you run me down in the chase. But here's summat of a red color that may suit a weak stomach, mayhap. That Master Kirby is no first-rate in a boat; but he'll tack a cart among the stumps, all the same as a Lon'on pilot will back and fill, through the colliers in the Pool."

As the steward ascended while talking, by the time he had ended his speech he appeared on the rock with the desired restoratives, exhibiting the worn-out and bloated features of a man who had run deep in a debauch, and that lately.

Elizabeth took from the hands of Edwards the liquor which he offered and then motioned to be left again to herself.

The youth turned at her bidding, and observed Natty kindly assiduous around the person of Mohegan. When their eyes met, the hunter said sorrowfully:

"His time has come, lad; see it in his eyes—when an Indian fixes his eye, he means to go but to one place; and what the wilful creatures put their minds on, they're sure to do."

A quick tread prevented the reply, and in a few moments, to the amazement of the whole party, Mr. Grant was seen clinging to the side of the mountain, and striving to reach the place where they stood. Oliver sprang to his assistance, and by their united efforts the worthy divine was soon placed safely among them.

"How came you added to our number?" cried Edwards. "Is the hill alive with people at a time like this?"

The hasty but pious thanksgivings of the clergyman were soon ejaculated, and, when he succeeded in collecting his bewildered senses, he replied:

"I heard that my child was seen coming to the mountain; and, when the fire broke over its summit, my uneasiness drew me up the road, where I found Louisa, in terror for Miss Temple. It was to seek her that I came into this dangerous place; and I think, but for God's mercy, through the dogs of Natty, I should have perished in the flames myself."

"Ay! follow the hounds, and if there's an opening they'll scent it out," said Natty; "their noses be given them the same as man's reason."

"I did so, and they led me to this place; but, praise be to God that I see you all safe and well."

"No, no," returned the hunter; "safe we be, but as for well, John can't be called in a good way, unless you'll say that for a man that's taking his last look at 'arth."

"He speaks the truth!" said the divine, with the holy awe with which he ever approached the dying; "I have been by too many death-beds, not to see that the hand of the tyrant is laid on this old warrior. Oh! how consoling it is to know that he has not rejected the offered mercy in the hour of his strength and of worldly temptations! The offspring of a race of heathens, he has in truth been 'as a brand plucked from the burning."

"No, no," returned Natty, who alone stood with him by the side of the dying warrior; "it is no burning that ails him, though his

Indian feelings made him scorn to move, unless it be the burning of man's wicked thoughts for near fourscore years; but it's natur' giving out in a chasm that's run too long.—Down with ye, Hector! down, I say! Flesh Isn't iron, that a man can live forever, and see his kith and kin driven to a far country, and he left to mourn, with none to keep him company.”

“John,” said the divine, tenderly, “do you hear me? do you wish the prayers appointed by the church, at this trying moment?”

The Indian turned his ghastly face toward the speaker, and fastened his dark eyes on him, steadily, but vacantly.

No sign of recognition was made: and in a moment he moved his head again slowly toward the vale, and began to sing, using his own language, in those low, guttural tones, that have been so often mentioned, his notes rising with his theme, till they swelled so loud as to be distinct.

“I will come! I will come! to the land of the just I will come! The Maquas I have slain! I have slain the Maquas! and the Great Spirit calls to his son. I will come! I will come to the land of the just! I will come!”

“What says he, Leather-Stocking?” Inquired the priest, with tender interest; “sings he the Redeemer's praise?”

“No, no—'tis his own praise that he speaks now,” said Natty, turning in a melancholy manner from the sight of his dying friend; “and a good right he has to say it all, for I know every word to be true.”

“May heaven avert such self-righteousness from his heart! Humility and penitence are the seals of Christianity; and, without feeling them deeply seated in the soul, all hope is delusive, and leads to vain expectations. Praise himself when his whole soul and body should unite to praise his Maker! John! you have enjoyed the blessings of a gospel ministry, and have been called from out a multitude of sinners and pagans, and, I trust, for a wise and gracious purpose. Do you now feel what it is to be justified by our Saviour's death, and reject all weak and idle dependence on good works, that spring from man's pride and vainglory?”

The Indian did not regard his interrogator, but he raised his head again, and said in a low, distinct voice:

“Who can say that the Maquas know the back of the Mohegan? What enemy that trusted in him did not see the morning? What Mingo that he chased ever sang the song of triumph? Did Mohegan ever he? No; the truth lived in him, and none else could come out of him. In his youth he was a warrior, and his moccasins left the stain of blood. In his age he was wise; his words at the council fire did not blow away with the winds.”

“Ah! he has abandoned that vain relic of paganism, his songs,” cried the divine; “what says he now? is he sensible of his lost state?”

“Lord!! man,” said Natty, “he knows his end is at hand as well as you or I; but, so far from thinking it a loss, he believes it to be a great gain. He is old and stiff, and you have made the game so scarce and shy, that better shots than him find it hard to get a livelihood. Now he thinks he shall travel where it will always be good hunting; Where no wicked or unjust Indians can go; and where he shall meet all his tribe together agin. There's not much loss in that, to a man whose hands are hardly fit for basket-making Loss! if there be any loss, 'twill be to me. I'm sure after he's gone, there will be but little left for me but to follow.”

“His example and end, which, I humbly trust, shall yet be made glorious,” returned Mr. Grant, “should lead your mind to dwell on the things of another life. But I feel it to be my duty to smooth the way for the parting spirit. This is the moment, John, when the reflection that you did not reject the mediation of the Redeemer, will bring balm to your soul. Trust not to any act of former days, but lay the burden of your sins at his feet, and you have his own blessed assurance that he will not desert you.”

“Though all you say be true, and you have scriptur' gospels for it, too,” said Natty, “you will make nothing of the Indian. He hasn't seen a Moravian p sin' the war; and it's hard to keep them from going hack to their native ways. I should think 'twould be as well to let the old man pass in peace. He's happy now; I know it by his eye; and that's more than I would say for the chief, sin' the time the Delawares broke up from the head waters of their river and went west. Ah's me! 'tis a greivous long time that, and many dark days have we seen together sin' it.”

“Hawk-eye!” said Mohegan, rousing with the last glimmering of life. “Hawk-eye! listen to the words of your brother.”

“Yes, John,” said the hunter, in English, strongly affected by the appeal, and drawing to his side, “we have been brothers; and more so than it means in the Indian tongue. What would ye have with me, Chingachgook?”

“Hawk-eye! my fathers call me to the happy hunting grounds. The path is clear, and the eyes of Mohegan grow young. I look—but I see no white-skins; there are none to be seen but just and brave Indians. Farewell, Hawk-eye—you shall go with the Fire-eater and the Young Eagle to the white man's heaven; but I go after my fathers. Let the bow, and tomahawk, and pipe, and the wampum of Mohegan he laid in his grave; for when he starts 'twil be in the night, like a warrior on a war-party, and he can not stop to seek them.”

“What says he, Nathaniel?” cried Mr. Grant, earnestly, and with obvious anxiety; “does he recall the promises of the mediation? and trust his salvation to the Rock of Ages?”

Although the faith of the hunter was by no means clear, yet the fruits of early instruction had not entirely fallen in the wilderness. He believed in one Cod, and one heaven; and when the strong feeling excited by the leave-taking of his old companion, which was exhibited by the powerful working of every muscle in his weather-beaten face, suffered him to speak, he replied:

“No—no—he trusts only to the Great Spirit of the savages, and to his own good deeds. He thinks, like all his people, that he is to be young agin, and to hunt, and be happy to the end of etarnity, its pretty much the same with all colors, parson. I could never bring myself to think that I shall meet with these hounds, or my piece, in another world; though the thought of leaving them forever sometimes brings hard feelings over me, and makes me cling to life with a greater craving than beseems three-Score-and-ten.”

“The Lord in his mercy avert such a death from one who has been sealed with the sign of the cross!” cried the minister, in holy fervor. “John—”

He paused for the elements. During the period occupied by the events which we have related, the dark clouds in the horizon had continued to increase in numbers and multitude; and the awful stillness that now pervaded the air, announced a crisis in the state of the atmosphere. The flames, which yet continued to rage along the sides of the mountain, no longer whirled in uncertain currents of their

own eddies, but blazed high and steadily toward the heavens. There was even a quietude in the ravages of the destructive element, as if it foresaw that a hand greater titan even its own desolating power, was about to stay its progress. The piles of smoke which lay above the valley began to rise, and were dispelling rapidly; and streaks of livid lightning were dancing through the masses of clouds that impended over the western hills. While Mr. Grant was speaking, a flash, which sent its quivering light through the gloom, laying bare the whole opposite horizon, was followed by a loud crash of thunder, that rolled away among the hills, seeming to shake the foundations of the earth to their centre. Mohegan raised him self, as if in obedience to a signal for his departure, and stretched his wasted arm toward the west. His dark face lighted with a look of joy; which, with all other expressions, gradually disappeared; the muscles stiffening as they retreated to a state of rest; a slight convulsion played, for a single instant, about his lips; and his arm slowly dropped by his side, leaving the frame of the dead warrior reposing against the rock with its glassy eyes open, and fixed on the distant hills, as if the deserted shell were tracing the flight of the spirit to its new abode.

All this Mr. Grant witnessed in silent awe; but when the last echoes of the thunder died away he clasped his hands together, with pious energy, and repeated, in the full, rich tones of assured faith;

“Lord! how unsearchable are Thy judgments; and Thy ways past finding out! I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”

As the divine closed this burst of devotion, he bowed his head meekly to his bosom, and looked all the dependence and humility that the inspired language expressed.

When Mr. Grant retired from the body, the hunter approached, and taking the rigid hand of his friend, looked him wistfully in the face for some time without speaking, when he gave vent to his feelings by saying, in the mournful voice of one who felt deeply:

“Red skin or white, it's all over now! he's to be judged by a righteous Judge, and by no laws that's made to suit times, and new ways. Well, there's only one more death, and the world will be left to me and the hounds, Ah's me! a man must wait the time of God's pleasure, but I begin to weary of life. There is scarcely a tree standing that I know, and it's hard to find a face that I was ac-quainted with in my younger days.”

Large drops of rain now began to fall, and diffuse them selves over the dry rock, while the approach of the thunder shower was rapid and certain. The body of the Indian was hastily removed into the cave beneath, followed by the whining hounds, who missed and moaned for the look of intelligence that had always met their salutations to the chief.

Edwards made some hasty and confused excuse for not taking Elizabeth into the same place, which was now completely closed in front with logs and bark, saying some-thing that she hardly understood about its darkness, and the unpleasantness of being with the dead body. Miss Temple, however, found a sufficient shelter against the torrent of rain that fell, under the projection of a rock which overhung them, But long before the shower was over, the sounds of voices were heard below them crying aloud for Elizabeth, and men soon appeared beating the dying embers of the bushes, as they worked their way cautiously among the unextinguished brands.

At the first short cessation in the rain, Oliver conducted Elizabeth to the road, where he left her. Before parting, however, he found time to say, in a fervent manner that his companion was now at no loss to interpret.

“The moment of concealment is over, Miss Temple. By this time to-morrow, I shall remove a veil that perhaps it has been weakness to keep around me and my allas so long. But I have had romantic and foolish wishes and weakness; and who has not, that is young and torn by conflicting passions? God bless you! I hear your father's voice; he is coming up the road, and I would not, just now, subject myself to detention. Thank Heaven, you are safe again; that alone removes the weight of a world from my spirit!”

He waited for no answer, but sprang into the woods. Elizabeth, notwithstanding she heard the cries of her father as he called upon her name, paused until he was concealed among the smoking trees, when she turned, and in a moment rushed into the arms of her half-distracted Parent.

A carriage had been provided, into which Miss Temple hastily entered; when the cry was passed along the hill, that the lost one was found, and the people returned to the village wet and dirty, but elated with the thought that the daughter of their landlord had escaped from so horrid and untimely an end.\*



\* The probability of a fire in the woods similar to that here described has been questioned. The writer can only say that he once witnessed a fire in another part of New York that compelled a man to desert his wagon and horses in the highway, and in which the latter were destroyed. In order to estimate the probability of such an event, it is necessary to remember the effects of a long drought in that climate and the abundance of dead wood which is found in a forest like that described. The fires in the American forests frequently rage to such an extent as to produce a sensible effect on the atmosphere at a distance of fifty miles. Houses, barns, and fences are quite commonly swept away in their course.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Selictar! unsheathe then our chief's scimeter;  
Tambourgi! thy 'larum gives promise of war;  
Ye mountains! that see us descend to the shore,  
Shall view us as victors, or view us no more."  
—Byron.

The heavy showers that prevailed during the remainder of the day completely stopped the progress of the flames; though glimmering fires were observed during the night, on different parts of the hill, wherever there was a collection of fuel to feed the element. The next day the woods for many miles were black and smoking, and were stripped of every vestige of brush and dead wood; but the pines and hemlocks still reared their heads proudly among the hills, and even the smaller trees of the forest retained a feeble appearance of life and vegetation.

The many tongues of rumor were busy in exaggerating the miraculous escape of Elizabeth; and a report was generally credited, that Mohegan had actually perished in the flames. This belief became confirmed, and was indeed rendered probable, when the direful intelligence reached the village that Jotham Riddel, the miner, was found in his hole, nearly dead with suffocation, and burnt to such a degree that no hopes were entertained of his life.

The public attention became much alive to the events of the last few days; and, just at this crisis, the convicted counterfeiter took the hint from Natty, and, on the night succeeding the fire, found means to cut through their log prison also, and to escape unpunished. When this news began to circulate through the village, blended with the fate of Jotham, and the exaggerated and tortured reports of the events on the hill, the popular opinion was freely expressed, as to the propriety of seizing such of the fugitives as remained within reach. Men talked of the cave as a secret receptacle of guilt; and, as the rumor of ores and metals found its way into the confused medley of conjectures, counterfeiting, and everything else that was wicked and dangerous to the peace of society, suggested themselves to the busy fancies of the populace.

While the public mind was in this feverish state, it was hinted that the wood had been set on fire by Edwards and the Leather-Stocking, and that, consequently, they alone were responsible for the damages. This opinion soon gained ground, being most circulated by those who, by their own heedlessness, had caused the evil; and there was one irresistible burst of the common sentiment that an attempt should be made to punish the offenders. Richard was by no means deaf to this appeal, and by noon he set about in earnest to see the laws executed.

Several stout young men were selected, and taken apart with an appearance of secrecy, where they received some important charge from the sheriff, immediately under the eyes, but far removed from the ears, of all in the village. Possessed of a knowledge of their duty, these youths hurried into the hills, with a bustling manner, as if the fate of the world depended on their diligence, and, at the same time, with an air of mystery as great as if they were engaged on secret matters of the state.

At twelve precisely a drum beat the "long roll" before the "Bold Dragoon," and Richard appeared, accompanied by Captain Hollister, who was clad in Investments as commander of the "Templeton Light Infantry," when the former demanded of the latter the aid of the posse comitatus in enforcing the laws of the country. We have not room to record the speeches of the two gentlemen on this occasion, but they are preserved in the columns of the little blue newspaper, which is yet to be found on the file, and are said to be highly creditable to the legal formula of one of the parties, and to the military precision of the other. Everything had been previously arranged, and, as the red-coated drummer continued to roll out his clattering notes, some five-and-twenty privates appeared in the ranks, and arranged themselves in the order of battle.

As this corps was composed of volunteers, and was commanded by a man who had passed the first five-and-thirty years of his life in camps and garrisons, it was the non-parallel of military science in that country, and was confidently pronounced by the judicious part of the Templeton community, to be equal in skill and appearance to any troops in the known world; in physical endowments they were, certainly, much superior! To this assertion there were but three dissenting voices, and one dissenting opinion. The opinion belonged to Marmaduke, who, however, saw no necessity for its promulgation. Of the voices, one, and that a pretty loud one, came from the spouse of the commander himself, who frequently reproached her husband for condescending to lead such an irregular band of warriors, after he had filled the honorable station of sergeant-major to a dashing corps of Virginia cavalry through much of the recent war.

Another of these skeptical sentiments was invariably expressed by Mr. Pump, whenever the company paraded generally in some such terms as these, which were uttered with that sort of meekness that a native of the island of our forefathers is apt to assume when he condescends to praise the customs or character of her truant progeny:

"It's mayhap that they knows summat about loading and firing, d'ye see, but as for working ship? why, a corporal's guard of the Boadishy's marines would back and fill on their quarters in such a manner as to surround and captivate them all in half a glass." As there was no one to deny this assertion, the marines of the Boadicea were held in a corresponding degree of estimation.

The third unbeliever was Monsieur Le Quoi, who merely whispered to the sheriff, that the corps was one of the finest he had ever seen second only to the Mousquetaires of Le Boa Louis! However, as Mrs. Hollister thought there was something like actual service in the present appearances, and was, in consequence, too busily engaged with certain preparations of her own, to make her comments; as Benjamin was absent, and Monsieur Le Quoi too happy to find fault with anything, the corps escaped criticism and comparison altogether on this momentous day, when they certainly had greater need of self-confidence than on any other previous occasion. Marmaduke was said to be again closeted with Mr. Van der School and no interruption was offered to the movements of the troops. At

two o'clock precisely the corps shouldered arms, beginning on the right wing, next to the veteran, and carrying the motion through to the left with great regularity. When each musket was quietly fixed in its proper situation, the order was given to wheel to the left, and march. As this was bringing raw troops, at once, to face their enemy, it is not to be supposed that the manoeuvre was executed with their usual accuracy; but as the music struck up the inspiring air of Yankee-doodle, and Richard, accompanied by Mr. Doolittle preceded the troops boldly down the street, Captain Hollister led on, with his head elevated to forty-five degrees, with a little, low cocked hat perched on his crown, carrying a tremendous dragoon sabre at a poise, and trailing at his heels a huge steel scabbard, that had war in its very clattering. There was a good deal of difficulty in getting all the platoons (there were six) to look the same way; but, by the time they reached the defile of the bridge, the troops were in sufficiently compact order. In this manner they marched up the hill to the summit of the mountain, no other alteration taking place in the disposition of the forces, excepting that a mutual complaint was made, by the sheriff and the magistrate, of a failure in wind, which gradually brought these gentlemen to the rear. It will be unnecessary to detail the minute movements that succeeded. We shall briefly say, that the scouts came in and reported, that, so far from retreating, as had been anticipated, the fugitives had evidently gained a knowledge of the attack, and were fortifying for a desperate resistance. This intelligence certainly made a material change, not only in the plans of the leaders, but in the countenances of the soldiery also. The men looked at one another with serious faces, and Hiram and Richard began to consult together, apart.

At this conjuncture, they were joined by Billy Kirby, who came along the highway, with his axe under his arm, as much in advance of his team as Captain Hollister had been of his troops in the ascent. The wood-chopper was amazed at the military array, but the sheriff eagerly availed himself of this powerful reinforcement, and commanded his assistance in putting the laws in force. Billy held Mr. Jones in too much deference to object; and it was finally arranged that he should be the bearer of a summons to the garrison to surrender before they proceeded to extremities. The troops now divided, one party being led by the captain, over the Vision, and were brought in on the left of the cave, while the remainder advanced upon its right, under the orders of the lieutenant. Mr. Jones and Dr. Todd—for the surgeon was in attendance also—appeared on the platform of rock, immediately over the heads of the garrison, though out of their sight. Hiram thought this approaching too near, and he therefore accompanied Kirby along the side of the hill to within a safe distance of the fortifications, where he took shelter behind a tree. Most of the men discovered great accuracy of eye in bringing some object in range between them and their enemy, and the only two of the besiegers, who were left in plain sight of the besieged, were Captain Hollister on one side, and the wood-chopper on the other. The veteran stood up boldly to the front, supporting his heavy sword in one undeviating position, with his eye fixed firmly on his enemy, while the huge form of Billy was placed in that kind of quiet repose, with either hand thrust into his bosom, bearing his axe under his right arm, which permitted him, like his own oxen, to rest standing. So far, not a word had been exchanged between the belligerents. The besieged had drawn together a pile of black logs and branches of trees, which they had formed into a chevaux-de-frise, making a little circular abatis in front of the entrance to the cave. As the ground was steep and slippery in every direction around the place, and Benjamin appeared behind the works on one side, and Natty on the other, the arrangement was by no means contemptible, especially as the front was sufficiently guarded by the difficulty of the approach. By this time, Kirby had received his orders, and he advanced coolly along the mountain, picking his way with the same indifference as if he were pursuing his ordinary business. When he was within a hundred feet of the works, the long and much-dreaded rifle of the Leather-Stocking was seen issuing from the parapet, and his voice cried aloud:

"Keep off! Billy Kirby, keep off! I wish ye no harm; but if a man of ye all comes a step nigher, there'll be blood spilt atwixt us. God forgive the one that draws it first, but so it must be."

"Come, old chap," said Billy, good-naturedly, "don't be crabb'd, but hear what a man has got to say I've no consarn in the business, only to see right 'twixt man and man; and I don't kear the valie of a beetle-ring which gets the better; but there's Squire Doolittle, yonder be hind the beech sapling, he has invited me to come in and ask you to give up to the law—that's all."

"I see the varmint! I see his clothes!" cried the indignant Natty: "and if he'll only show so much flesh as will bury a rifle bullet, thirty to the pound, I'll make him feel me. Go away, Billy, I bid ye; you know my aim, and I bear you no malice."

"You over-calculate your aim, Natty," said the other, as he stepped behind a pine that stood near him, "if you think to shoot a man through a tree with a three-foot butt. I can lay this tree right across you in ten minutes by any man's watch, and in less time, too; so be civil—I want no more than what's right."

There was a simple seriousness in the countenance of Natty, that showed he was much in earnest; but it was also evident that he was reluctant to shed human blood. He answered the taunt of the wood-chopper, by saying:

"I know you drop a tree where you will, Billy Kirby; but if you show a hand, or an arm, in doing it, there'll be bones to be set, and blood to staunch. If it's only to get into the cave that ye want, wait till a two hours' sun, and you may enter it in welcome; but come in now you shall not. There's one dead body already, lying on the cold rocks, and there's another in which the life can hardly be said to stay. If you will come in, there'll be dead with out as well as within."

The wood-chopper stepped out fearlessly from his cover, and cried:

"That's fair; and what's fair is right. He wants you to stop till it's two hours to sundown; and I see reason in the thing. A man can give up when he's wrong, if you don't crowd him too hard; but you crowd a man, and he gets to be like a stubborn ox—the more you beat, the worse he kicks."

The sturdy notions of independence maintained by Billy neither suited the emergency nor the impatience of Mr. Jones, who was burning with a desire to examine the hid den mysteries of the cave. He therefore interrupted this amicable dialogue with his own voice;

"I command you Nathaniel Bumpo, by my authority, to surrender your person to the law," he cried. "And I command you, gentlemen, to aid me in performing my duty. Benjamin Penguillan I arrest you, and order you to follow me to the jail of the county, by virtue of this warrant."

"I'd follow ye, Squire Dickens," said Benjamin, removing the pipe from his month (for during the whole scene the ex-major-domo had been very composedly smoking); "ay! I'd sail in your wake, to the end of the world, if-so—be that there was such a place, where

there isn't, seeing that it's round. Now mayhap, Master Hollister, having lived all your life on shore, you isn't acquainted that the world, d'ye see."

"Surrender!" interrupted the veteran, in a voice that startled his hearers, and which actually caused his own forces to recoil several paces; "surrender, Benjamin Pengullan, or expect no quarter."

"Damn your quarter!" said Benjamin, rising from the log on which he was seated, and taking a squint along the barrel of the swivel, which had been brought on the hill during the night, and now formed the means of defence on his side of the works. "Look you, master or captain, thof I questions if ye know the name of a rope, except the one that's to hang ye, there's no need of singing out, as if ye was hailing a deaf man on a topgallant yard. May-hap you think you've got my true name in your sheep skin; but what British sailor finds it worth while to sail in these seas, without a sham on his stern, in case of need, d'ye see. If you call me Pengullan, you calls me by the name of the man on whose hand, dye see, I hove into daylight; and he was a gentleman; and that's more than my worst enemy will say of any of the family of Benjamin Stubbs."

"Send the warrant round to me, and I'll put in an alias," cried Hiram, from behind his cover.

"Put in a jackass, and you'll put in yourself, Mister Doo-but-little," shouted Benjamin, who kept squinting along his little iron tube, with great steadiness.

"I give you but one moment to yield," cried Richard. "Benjamin! Benjamin! this is not the gratitude I expected from you."

"I tell you, Richard Jones," said Natty, who dreaded the sheriff's influence over his comrade; "though the canister the gal brought be lost, there's powder enough in the cave to lift the rock you stand on. I'll take off my roof if you don't hold your peace."

"I think it beneath the dignity of my office to parley further with the prisoners," the sheriff observer to his companion, while they both retired with a precipitancy that Captain Hollister mistook for the signal to advance.

"Charge baggonet!" shouted the veteran; "march!"

Although this signal was certainly expected, it took the assailed a little by surprise, and the veteran approached the works, crying, "Courage, my brave lads! give them no quarter unless they surrender;" and struck a furious blow upward with his sabre, that would have divided the steward into moieties by subjecting him to the process of decapitation, but for the fortunate interference of the muzzle of the swivel. As it was, the gun was dismounted at the critical moment that Benjamin was applying his pipe to the priming, and in consequence some five or six dozen of rifle bullets were projected into the air, in nearly a perpendicular line. Philosophy teaches us that the atmosphere will not retain lead; and two pounds of the metal, moulded into bullets of thirty to the pound, after describing an ellipsis in their journey, returned to the earth rattling among the branches of the trees directly over the heads of the troops stationed in the rear of their captain. Much of the success of an attack, made by irregular soldiers, depends on the direction in which they are first got in motion. In the present instance it was retrograde, and in less than a minute after the bellowing report of the swivel among the rocks and caverns, the whole weight of the attack from the left rested on the prowess of the single arm of the veteran. Benjamin received a severe contusion from the recoil of his gun, which produced a short stupor, during which period the ex-steward was prostrate on the ground. Captain Hollister availed himself of this circumstance to scramble over the breastwork and obtain a footing in the bastion—for such was the nature of the fortress, as connected with the cave. The moment the veteran found himself within the works of his enemy, he rushed to the edge of the fortification, and, waving his sabre over his head, shouted:

"Victory! come on, my brave boys, the work's our own!"

All this was perfectly military, and was such an example as a gallant officer was in some measure bound to exhibit to his men but the outcry was the unlucky cause of turning the tide of success. Natty, who had been keeping a vigilant eye on the wood-chopper, and the enemy immediately before him, wheeled at this alarm, and was appalled at beholding his comrade on the ground, and the veteran standing on his own bulwark, giving forth the cry of victory! The muzzle of the long rifle was turned instantly toward the captain. There was a moment when the life of the old soldier was in great jeopardy but the object to shoot at was both too large and too near for the Leather-Stocking, who, instead of pulling his trigger, applied the gun to the rear of his enemy, and by a powerful shove sent him outside of the works with much greater rapidity than he had entered them. The spot on which Captain Hollister alighted was directly in front, where, as his feet touched the ground, so steep and slippery was the side of the mountain, it seemed to recede from under them. His motion was swift, and so irregular as utterly to confuse the faculties of the old soldier. During its continuance, he supposed himself to be mounted, and charging through the ranks of his enemy. At every tree he made a blow, of course, as at a foot-soldier; and just as he was making the cut "St. George" at a half burnt sapling he landed in the highway, and, to his utter amazement, at the feet of his own spouse. When Mrs. Hollister, who was toiling up the hill, followed by at least twenty curious boys, leaning with one hand on the staff with which she ordinarily walked, and bearing in the other an empty bag, witnessed this exploit of her husband, indignation immediately got the better, not only of her religion, but of her philosophy.

"Why, sargeant! is it flying ye are?" she cried—"that I should live to see a husband of mine turn his hack to an inimy! and such a one! Here I have been telling the b'ys, as we come along, all about the saige of Yorrektown, and how ye was hurted; and how ye'd be acting the same agin the day; and I mate ye retraiting jist as the first gun is fired. Och! I may trow away the bag! for if there's plunder, 'twill not be the wife of sich as yerself that will be privileged to be getting the same. They do say, too, there is a power of goold and silver in the place—the Lord forgive me for setting my heart on woorldly things; but what falls in the battle, there's scriptur' for believing, is the just property of the victor."

"Retreating!" exclaimed the amazed veteran; "where's my horse? he has been shot under me—I——"

"Is the man mad?" interrupted his wife—"devil the horse do ye own, sargeant, and ye're nothing but a shabby captain of malaishy. Oh! if the ra'al captain was here, tis the other way ye'd be riding, dear, or you would not follow your laider!"

While this worthy couple were thus discussing events, the battle began to rage more violently than ever above them. When Leather-Stocking saw his enemy fairly under headway, as Benjamin would express it, he gave his attention to the right wing of the assailants. It would have been easy for Kirby, with his powerful frame, to have seized the moment to scale the bastion, and, with his great strength,

to have sent both of its defenders in pursuit of the veteran; but hostility appeared to be the passion that the wood-chopper indulged the least in at that moment, for, in a voice that was heard by the retreating left wing, he shouted:

“Hurrah well done, captain! keep it up! how he handles his bush-hook! he makes nothing of a sapling!” and such other encouraging exclamations to the flying veteran, until, overcome by mirth, the good-natured fellow seated himself on the ground, kicking the earth with delight, and giving vent to peal after peal of laughter.

Natty stood all this time in a menacing attitude, with his rifle pointed over the breastwork, watching with a quick and cautious eye the least movement of the assailants. The outcry unfortunately tempted the ungovernable curiosity of Hiram to take a peep from behind his cover at the state of the battle. Though this evolution was performed with great caution, in protecting his front, he left, like many a better commander, his rear exposed to the attacks of his enemy. Mr. Doolittle belonged physically to a class of his countrymen, to whom Nature has denied, in their formation, the use of curved lines. Every thing about him was either straight or angular. But his tailor was a woman who worked, like a regimental contractor, by a set of rules that gave the same configuration to the whole human species. Consequently, when Mr. Doolittle leaned forward in the manner described, a loose drapery appeared behind the tree, at which the rifle of Natty was pointed with the quickness of lightning. A less experienced man would have aimed at the flowing robe, which hung like a festoon half-way to the earth; but the Leather-Stocking knew both the man and his female tailor better; and when the smart report of the rifle was heard, Kirby, who watched the whole manoeuvre in breathless expectation, saw the bark fly from the beech and the cloth, at some distance above the loose folds, wave at the same instant. No battery was ever unmasked with more promptitude than Hiram advanced from behind the tree at this summons.

He made two or three steps, with great precision, to the front and, placing one hand on the afflicted part, stretched forth the other with a menacing air toward Natty, and cried aloud:

“Gawd darn ye: this shan't be settled so easy; I'll follow it up from the 'common pleas' to the 'court of errors.'”

Such a shocking imprecation, from the mouth of so orderly a man as Squire Doolittle, with the fearless manner in which he exposed himself, together with, perhaps, the knowledge that Natty's rifle was unloaded, encouraged the troops in the rear, who gave a loud shout, and fired a volley into the tree-tops, after the contents of the swivel. Animated by their own noise, the men now rushed on in earnest; and Billy Kirby, who thought the joke, good as it was, had gone far enough, was in the act of scaling the works, when Judge Temple appeared on the opposite side, exclaiming:

“Silence and peace! why do I see murder and blood shed attempted? Is not the law sufficient to protect itself, that armed bands must be gathered, as in rebellion and war, to see justice performed?”

“’Tis the posse comitatus,” shouted the sheriff, from a distant rock, “who-”

“Say rather a posse of demons. I command the peace.”

“Hold shied not blood!” cried a voice from the top of the Vision. “Hold, for the sake of Heaven, fire no more! all shall be yielded! you shall enter the cave!”

Amazement produced the desired effect. Natty, who had reloaded his piece, quietly seated himself on the logs, and rested his head on his hands, while the “Light Infantry” ceased their military movements, and waited the issue in suspense.

In less than a minute Edwards came rushing down the hill, followed by Major Hartman, with a velocity that was surprising for his years. They reached the terrace in an instant, from which the youth led the way, by the hollow in the rock, to the mouth of the cave, into which they both entered, leaving all without silent, and gazing after them with astonishment.

## CHAPTER XL.

"I am dumb. Were you the doctor, and I knew you not?"  
—Shakespeare.

During the five or six minutes that elapsed before the youth and Major reappeared. Judge Temple and the sheriff together with most of the volunteers, ascended to the terrace, where the latter began to express their conjectures of the result, and to recount their individual services in the conflict. But the sight of the peace-makers ascending the ravine shut every mouth.

On a rude chair, covered with undressed deer-skins, they supported a human being, whom they seated carefully and respectfully in the midst of the assembly. His head was covered by long, smooth locks of the color of snow. His dress, which was studiously neat and clean, was composed of such fabrics as none but the wealthiest classes wear, but was threadbare and patched; and on his feet were placed a pair of moccasins, ornamented in the best manner of Indian ingenuity. The outlines of his face were grave and dignified, though his vacant eye, which opened and turned slowly to the faces of those around him in unmeaning looks, too surely' announced that the period had arrived when age brings the mental imbecility of childhood.

Natty had followed the supporters of this unexpected object to the top of the cave, and took his station at a little distance behind him, leaning on his rifle, in the midst of his pursuers, with a fearlessness that showed that heavier interests than those which affected himself were to be decided. Major Hartmann placed himself beside the aged man, uncovered, with his whole soul beaming through those eyes which so commonly danced with frolic and humor. Edwards rested with one hand familiarly but affectionately on the chair, though his heart was swelling with emotions that denied him utterance.

All eyes were gazing intently, but each tongue continued mute. At length the decrepit stranger, turning his vacant looks from face to face, made a feeble attempt to rise, while a faint smile crossed his wasted face, like an habitual effort at courtesy, as he said, in a hollow, tremulous voice:

"Be pleased to be seated, gentlemen. The council will open immediately. Each one who loves a good and virtuous king will wish to see these colonies continue loyal. Be seated—I pray you, be seated, gentlemen. The troops shall halt for the night."

"This is the wandering of insanity!" said Marmaduke: "who will explain this scene."

"No, sir," said Edwards firmly, "'tis only the decay of nature; who is answerable for its pitiful condition, remains to be shown."

"Will the gentlemen dine with us, my son?" said the old stranger, turning to a voice that he both knew and loved. "Order a repast suitable for his Majesty's officers. You know we have the best of game always at command."

"Who is this man?" asked Marmaduke, in a hurried voice, in which the dawns of conjecture united with interest to put the question.

"This man," returned Edwards calmly, his voice, however, gradually rising as he proceeded; "this man, sir, whom you behold hid in caverns, and deprived of every-thing that can make life desirable, was once the companion and counsellor of those who ruled your country. This man, whom you see helpless and feeble, was once a warrior, so brave and fearless, that even the intrepid natives gave him the name of the Fire-eater. This man, whom you now see destitute of even the ordinary comfort of a cabin, in which to shelter his head, was once the owner of great riches—and, Judge Temple, he was the rightful proprietor of this very soil on which we stand. This man was the father of——"

"This, then," cried Marmaduke, with a powerful emotion, "this, then, is the lost Major Effingham!"

"Lost indeed," said the youth, fixing a piercing eye on the other.

"And you! and you!" continued the Judge, articulating with difficulty.

"I am his grandson."

A minute passed in profound silence. All eyes were fixed on the speakers, and even the old German appeared to wait the issue in deep anxiety. But the moment of agitation soon passed. Marmaduke raised his head from his bosom, where it had sunk, not in shame, but in devout mental thanksgivings, and, as large tears fell over his fine, manly face, he grasped the hand of the youth warmly, and said:

"Oliver, I forgive all thy harshness—all thy suspicions. I now see it all. I forgive thee everything, but suffering this aged man to dwell in such a place, when not only my habitation, but my fortune, were at his and thy command."

"He's true as ter steel!" shouted Major Hartmann; "titn't I tell you, lat, dat Marmatuke Temple vas a friend dat woult never fail in ter dime as of neet?"

"It is true, Judge Temple, that my opinions of your conduct have been staggered by what this worthy gentle man has told me. When I found it impossible to convey my grandfather back whence the enduring love of this old man brought him, without detection and exposure, I went to the Mohawk in quest of one of his former comrades, in whose justice I had dependence. He is your friend, Judge Temple, but, if what he says be true, both my father and myself may have judged you harshly."

"You name your father!" said Marmaduke tenderly—"was he, indeed, lost in the packet?"

"He was. He had left me, after several years of fruit less application and comparative poverty, in Nova Scotia, to obtain the compensation for his losses which the British commissioners had at length awarded. After spending a year in England, he was returning to Halifax, on his way to a government to which he had been appointed, in the West Indies, intending to go to the place where my grand father had sojourned during and since the war, and take him with us."

"But thou!" said Marmaduke, with powerful interest; "I had thought that thou hadst perished with him."

A flush passed over the cheeks of the young man, who gazed about him at the wondering faces of the volunteers, and continued silent. Marmaduke turned to the veteran captain, who just then rejoined his command, and said:

"March thy soldiers back again, and dismiss them, the zeal of the sheriff has much mistaken his duty.—Dr. Todd, I will thank you to attend to the injury which Hiram Doolittle has received in this untoward affair,—Richard, you will oblige me by sending up the carriage to the top of the hill.—Benjamin, return to your duty in my family."

Unwelcome as these orders were to most of the auditors, the suspicion that they had somewhat exceeded the whole some restraints of the law, and the habitual respect with which all the commands of the Judge were received, induced a prompt compliance.

When they were gone, and the rock was left to the parties most interested in an explanation, Marmaduke, pointing to the aged Major Effingham, said to his grand son:

"Had we not better remove thy parent from this open place until my carriage can arrive?"

"Pardon me, sir, the air does him good, and he has taken it whenever there was no dread of a discovery. I know not how to act, Judge Temple; ought I, can I suffer Major Effingham to become an inmate of your family?"

"Thou shalt be thyself the judge," said Marmaduke. "Thy father was my early friend. He intrusted his fortune to my care. When we separated he had such confidence in me that he wished on security, no evidence of the trust, even had there been time or convenience for exacting it. This thou hast heard?"

"Most truly, sir," said Edwards, or rather Effingham as we must now call him.

"We differed in politics. If the cause of this country was successful, the trust was sacred with me, for none knew of thy father's interest, if the crown still held its sway, it would be easy to restore the property of so loyal a subject as Colonel Effingham. Is not this plain?"

"The premises are good, sir," continued the youth, with the same incredulous look as before.

"Listen—listen, poy," said the German, "Dere is not a hair as of ter rogue in ter het of Herr Tchooge."

"We all know the issue of the struggle," continued Marmaduke, disregarding both. "Thy grandfather was left in Connecticut, regularly supplied by thy father with the means of such a subsistence as suited his wants. This I well knew, though I never had intercourse with him, even in our happiest days. Thy father retired with the troops to prosecute his claims on England. At all events, his losses must be great, for his real estates were sold, and I became the lawful purchaser. It was not unnatural to wish that he might have no bar to its just recovery."

"There was none, but the difficulty of providing for so many claimants."

"But there would have been one, and an insuperable one, and I announced to the world that I held these estates, multiplied by the times and my industry, a hundredfold in value, only as his trustee. Thou knowest that I supplied him with considerable sums immediately after the war."

"You did, until—"

"My letters were returned unopened. Thy father had much of thy own spirit, Oliver; he was sometimes hasty and rash." The Judge continued, in a self-condemning manner; "Perhaps my fault lies the other way: I may possibly look too far ahead, and calculate too deeply. It certainly was a severe trial to allow the man whom I most loved, to think ill of me for seven years, in order that he might honestly apply for his just remunerations. But, had he opened my last letters, thou wouldst have learned the whole truth. Those I sent him to England, by what my agent writes me, he did read. He died, Oliver, knowing all, he died my friend, and I thought thou hadst died with him."

"Our poverty would not permit us to pay for two passages," said the youth, with the extraordinary emotion with which he ever alluded to the degraded state of his family; "I was left in the Province to wait for his return, and, when the sad news of his loss reached me, I was nearly penniless."

"And what didst thou, boy?" asked Marmaduke in a faltering voice.

"I took my passage here in search of my grandfather; for I well knew that his resources were gone, with the half pay of my father. On reaching his abode, I learned that he had left it in secret; though the reluctant hireling, who had deserted him in his poverty, owned to my urgent entreaties, that he believed he had been carried away by an old man who had formerly been his servant. I knew at once it was Natty, for my father often—"

"Was Natty a servant of thy grandfather?" exclaimed the Judge.

"Of that too were you ignorant?" said the youth in evident surprise.

"How should I know it? I never met the Major, nor was the name of Bumpo ever mentioned to me. I knew him only as a man of the woods, and one who lived by hunting. Such men are too common to excite surprise."

"He was reared in the family of my grandfather; served him for many years during their campaigns at the West, where he became attached to the woods; and he was left here as a kind of locum tenens on the lands that old Mohegan (whose life my grandfather once saved) induced the Delawares to grant to him when they admitted him as an honorary member of their tribe.

"This, then, is thy Indian blood?"

"I have no other," said Edwards, smiling—"Major Effingham was adopted as the son of Mohegan, who at that time was the greatest man in his nation; and my father, who visited those people when a boy, received the name of the Eagle from them, on account of the shape of his face, as I understand. They have extended his title to me, I have no other Indian blood or breeding; though I have seen the hour, Judge Temple, when I could wish that such had been my lineage and education."

"Proceed with thy tale," said Marmaduke.

"I have but little more to say, sir, I followed to the lake where I had so often been told that Natty dwelt, and found him maintaining his old master in secret; for even he could not bear to exhibit to the world, in his poverty and dotage, a man whom a whole people once looked up to with respect."

"And what did you?"

"What did I? I spent my last money in purchasing a rifle, clad myself in a coarse garb, and learned to be a hunter by the side of Leather-Stocking. You know the rest, Judge Temple."

"Ant vere vas olt Fritz Hartmann?" said the German, reproachfully; "didst never hear a name as of olt Fritz Hartmann from ter mout of ter fader, lat?"

"I may have been mistaken, gentlemen," returned the youth, "but I had pride, and could not submit to such an exposure as this day even has reluctantly brought to light. I had plans that might have been visionary; but, should my parent survive till autumn, I purposed taking him with me to the city, where we have distant relatives, who must have learned to forget the Tory by this time. He decays rapidly," he continued mournfully, "and must soon lie by the side of old Mohegan."

The air being pure, and the day fine, the party continued conversing on the rock, until the wheels of Judge Temple's carriage were heard clattering up the side of the mountain, during which time the conversation was maintained with deep interest, each moment clearing up some doubtful action, and lessening the antipathy of the youth to Marmaduke. He no longer objected to the removal of his grand father, who displayed a childish pleasure when he found himself seated once more in a carriage. When placed in the ample hall of the mansion-house, the eyes of the aged veteran turned slowly to the objects in the apartment, and a look like the dawn of intellect would, for moments flit across his features, when he invariably offered some use less courtesies to those near him, wandering painfully in his subjects. The exercise and the change soon produced an exhaustion that caused them to remove him to his bed, where he lay for hours, evidently sensible of the change in his comforts, and exhibiting that mortifying picture of human nature, which too plainly shows that the propensities of the animal continue even after the nobler part of the creature appears to have vanished.

Until his parent was placed comfortably in bed, with Natty seated at his side, Effingham did not quit him. He then obeyed a summons to the library of the Judge, where he found the latter, with Major Hartmann, waiting for him.

"Read this paper, Oliver," said Marmaduke to him, as he entered, "and thou wilt find that, so far from intending thy family wrong during life, it has been my care to see that justice should be done at even a later day."

The youth took the paper, which his first glance told him was the will of the Judge. Hurried and agitated as he was, he discovered that the date corresponded with the time of the unusual depression of Marmaduke. As he proceeded, his eyes began to moisten, and the hand which held the instrument shook violently.

The will commenced with the usual forms, spun out by the ingenuity of Mr. Van der School: but, after this subject was fairly exhausted, the pen of Marmaduke became plainly visible. In clear, distinct, manly, and even eloquent language, he recounted his obligations to Colonel Effingham, the nature of their connection, and the circumstances in which they separated. He then proceeded to relate the motives of his silence, mentioning, however, large sums that he had forwarded to his friend, which had been returned with the letters unopened. After this, he spoke of his search for the grandfather who unaccountably disappeared, and his fears that the direct heir of the trust was buried in the ocean with his father.

After, in short, recounting in a clear narrative, the events which our readers must now be able to connect, he proceeded to make a fair and exact statement of the sums left in his care by Colonel Effingham. A devise of his whole estate to certain responsible trustees followed; to hold the same for the benefit, in equal moieties, of his daughter, on one part, and of Oliver Effingham, formerly a major in the army of Great Britain, and of his son Edward Oliver Effingham, and of his son Edward Oliver Effingham, or to the survivor of them, and the descendants of such survivor, forever, on the other part. The trust was to endure until 1810, when, if no person appeared, or could be found, after sufficient notice, to claim the moiety so devised, then a certain sum, calculating the principal and interest of his debt to Colonel Effingham, was to be paid to the heirs-at-law of the Effingham family, and the bulk of his estate was to be conveyed in fee to his daughter, or her heirs.

The tears fell from the eyes of the young man, as he read this undeniable testimony of the good faith of Marmaduke, and his bewildered gaze was still fastened on the paper, when a voice, that thrilled on every nerve, spoke near him, saying:

"Do you yet doubt us, Oliver?"

"I have never doubted you!" cried the youth, recovering his recollection and his voice, as he sprang to seize the hand of Elizabeth; "no, not one moment has my faith in you wavered."

"And my father—"

"God bless him!"

"I thank thee, my son," said the Judge, exchanging a warm pressure of the hand with the youth; "but we have both erred: thou hast been too hasty, and I have been too slow. One-half of my estates shall be thine as soon as they can be conveyed to thee; and, if what my suspicions tell me be true, I suppose the other must follow speedily." He took the hand which he held, and united it with that of his daughter, and motioned toward the door to the Major.

"I telt you vat, gal!" said the old German, good-humoredly; "if I vas as I vas ven I servit mit his grand-fader on ter lakes, ter lazy tog shouldn't vin ter prize as for nottin'."

"Come, come, old Fritz," said the Judge; "you are seventy, not seventeen; Richard waits for you with a bowl of eggnog, in the hall."

"Richart! ter duyvel!" exclaimed the other, hastening out of the room; "he makes ter nog as for ter horse vilt show ter sheriff mit my own hants! Ter duyvel! I pelieve he sweetens mit ter Yankee melasses!"



Marmaduke smiled and nodded affectionately at the young couple, and closed the door after them. If any of our readers expect that we are going to open it again, for their gratification, they are mistaken.

The tete-a-tete continued for a very unreasonable time—how long we shall not say; but it was ended by six o'clock in the evening, for at that hour Monsieur Le Quoi made his appearance agreeably to the appointment of the preceding day, and claimed the ear of Miss Temple. He was admitted; when he made an offer of his hand, with much suavity, together with his “amis beeg and leet”, his père, his mere and his sucreboosh.” Elizabeth might, possibly, have previously entered into some embarrassing and binding engagements with Oliver, for she declined the tender of all, in terms as polite, though perhaps a little more decided, than those in which they were made.

The Frenchman soon joined the German and the sheriff in the hall, who compelled him to take a seat with them at the table, where, by the aid of punch, wine, and egg nog, they soon extracted from the complaisant Monsieur Le Quoi the nature of his visit, it was evident that he had made the offer, as a duty which a well-bred man owed to a lady in such a retired place, before he had left the country, and that his feelings were but very little, if at all, interested in the matter. After a few potations, the waggish pair persuaded the exhilarated Frenchman that there was an inexcusable partiality in offering to one lady, and not extending a similar courtesy to another. Consequently, about nine, Monsieur Le Quoi sallied forth to the rectory, on a similar mission to Miss Grant, which proved as successful as his first effort in love.

When he returned to the mansion-house, at ten, Richard and the Major were still seated at the table. They attempted to persuade the Gaul, as the sheriff called him, that he should next try Remarkable Pettibone. But, though stimulated by mental excitement and wine, two hours of abstruse logic were thrown away on this subject; for he declined their advice, with a pertinacity truly astonishing in so polite a man.

When Benjamin lighted Monsieur Le Quoi from the door, he said, at parting:

“If-so-be, Mounsheer, you'd run alongside Mistress Pettybones, as the Squire Dickens was bidding ye, 'tis my notion you'd have been grappled; in which case, d'ye see, you mought have been troubled in swinging clear agin in a handsome manner; for thof Miss Lizzy and the parson's young 'un be tidy little vessels, that shoot by a body on a wind, Mistress Remarkable is summat of a galliot fashion: when you once takes 'em in tow, they doesn't like to be cast off agin.”

## CHAPTER XLI.

"Yes, sweep ye on!—  
We will not leave,  
For them who triumph those who grieve.  
With that armada gay  
Be laughter loud, and jocund shout—  
But with that skill Abides the minstrel tale."  
—Lord of the Isles.

The events of our tale carry us through the summer; and after making nearly the circle of the year, we must conclude our labors in the delightful month of October. Many important incidents had, however, occurred in the intervening period; a few of which it may be necessary to recount.

The two principal were the marriage of Oliver and Elizabeth, and the death of Major Effingham. They both took place early in September; and the former preceded the latter only a few days. The old man passed away like the last glimmering of a taper; and, though his death cast a melancholy over the family, grief could not follow such an end. One of the chief concerns of Marmaduke was to reconcile the even conduct of a magistrate with the course that his feelings dictated to the criminals. The day succeeding the discovery at the cave, however, Natty and Benjamin re-entered the jail peaceably, where they continued, well fed and comfortable, until the return of an express to Albany, who brought the governor's pardon to the Leather-Stocking. In the mean time, proper means were employed to satisfy Hiram for the assaults on his person; and on the same day the two comrades issued together into society again, with their characters not at all affected by the imprisonment.

Mr. Doolittle began to discover that neither architecture nor his law was quite suitable to the growing wealth and intelligence of the settlement; and after exacting the last cent that was attainable in his compromise, to use the language of the country he "pulled up stakes," and proceeded farther west, scattering his professional science and legal learning through the land; vestiges of both of which are to be discovered there even to the present hour.

Poor Jotham, whose life paid the forfeiture of his folly, acknowledged, before he died, that his reasons for believing in a mine were extracted from the lips of a sibyl, who, by looking in a magic glass, was enabled to discover the hidden treasures of the earth. Such superstition was frequent in the new settlements; and, after the first surprise was over, the better part of the community forgot the subject. But, at the same time that it removed from the breast of Richard a lingering suspicion of the acts of the three hunter, it conveyed a mortifying lesson to him, which brought many quiet hours, in future, to his cousin Marmaduke. It may be remembered that the sheriff confidently pronounced this to be no "visionary" scheme, and that word was enough to shut his lips, at any time within the next ten years.

Monsieur Le Quoi, who has been introduced to our readers because no picture of that country would be faithful without some such character, found the island of Martinique, and his "sucreboosh," in possession of the English but Marmaduke and his family were much gratified in soon hearing that he had returned to his bureau, in Paris; where he afterward issued yearly bulletins of his happiness, and of his gratitude to his friends in America.

With this brief explanation, we must return to our narrative. Let the American reader imagine one of our mildest October mornings, when the sun seems a ball of silvery fire, and the elasticity of the air is felt while it is inhaled, imparting vigor and life to the whole system; the weather, neither too warm nor too cold, but of that happy temperature which stirs the blood, without bringing the lassitude of spring. It was on such a morning, about the middle of the month, that Oliver entered the hall where Elizabeth was issuing her usual orders for the day, and requesting her to join him in a short excursion to the lakeside. The tender melancholy in the manner of her husband caught the attention of Elizabeth, who instantly abandoned her concerns, threw a light shawl across her shoulders, and, concealing her raven hair under a gypsy hat, and took his arm, and submitted herself, without a question, to his guidance. They crossed the bridge, and had turned from the highway, along the margin of the lake, before a word was exchanged. Elizabeth well knew, by the direction, the object of the walk, and respected the feelings of her companion too much to indulge in untimely conversation. But when they gained the open fields, and her eye roamed over the placid lake, covered with wild fowl already journeying from the great northern waters to seek a warmer sun, but lingering to play in the limpid sheet of the Otsego, and to the sides of the mountain, which were gay with the thousand dyes of autumn, as if to grace their bridal, the swelling heart of the young wife burst out in speech.

"This is not a time for silence, Oliver!" she said, clinging more fondly to his arm; "everything in Nature seems to speak the praises of the Creator; why should we, who have so much to be grateful for, be silent?"

"Speak on!" said her husband, smiling; "I love the sounds of your voice. You must anticipate our errand hither: I have told you my plans: how do you like them?"

"I must first see them," returned his wife. "But I have had my plans, too; it is time I should begin to divulge them."

"You! It is something for the comfort of my old friend, Natty, I know."

"Certainly of Natty; but we have other friends besides the Leather-Stocking to serve. Do you forget Louisa and her father?"

"No, surely; have I not given one of the best farms in the county to the good divine? As for Louisa, I should wish you to keep her always near us."

"You do!" said Elizabeth, slightly compressing her lips; "but poor Louisa may have other views for herself; she may wish to follow my example, and marry."

"I don't think it," said Effingham, musing a moment, "really don't know any one hereabouts good enough for her."

"Perhaps not her; but there are other places besides Templeton, and other churches besides 'New St. Paul's.'"

"Churches, Elizabeth! you would not wish to lose Mr. Grant, surely! Though simple, he is an excellent man I shall never find another who has half the veneration for my orthodoxy. You would humble me from a saint to a very common sinner."

"It must be done, sir," returned the lady, with a half-concealed smile, "though it degrades you from an angel to a man."

"But you forget the farm?"

"He can lease it, as others do. Besides, would you have a clergyman toil in the fields?"

"Where can he go? You forget Louisa."

"No, I do not forget Louisa," said Elizabeth, again compressing her beautiful lips. "You know, Effingham, that my father has told you that I ruled him, and that I should rule you. I am now about to exert my power."

"Anything, anything, dear Elizabeth, but not at the expense of us all: not at the expense of your friend."

"How do you know, sir, that it will be so much at the expense of my friend?" said the lady, fixing her eyes with a searching look on his countenance, where they met only the unsuspecting expression of manly regret.

"How do I know it? Why, it is natural that she should regret us."

"It is our duty to struggle with our natural feelings," returned the lady; "and there is but little cause to fear that such a spirit as Louisa's will not effect it."

"But what is your plan?"

"Listen, and you shall know. My father has procured a call for Mr. Grant, to one of the towns on the Hudson where he can live more at his ease than in journeying through these woods; where he can spend the evening of his life in comfort and quiet; and where his daughter may meet with such society, and form such a connection, as may be proper for one of her years and character."

"Bess! you amaze me! I did not think you had been such a manager!"

"Oh! I manage more deeply than you imagine, sir," said the wife, archly smiling again; "but it is thy will and it is your duty to submit—for a time at least."

Effingham laughed; but, as they approached the end of their walk, the subject was changed by common consent.

The place at which they arrived was the little spot of level ground where the cabin of the Leather-Stocking had so long stood. Elizabeth found it entirely cleared of rubbish, and beautifully laid down in turf, by the removal of sods, which, in common with the surrounding country, had grown gay, under the influence of profuse showers, as if a second spring had passed over the land. This little place was surrounded by a circle of mason-work, and they entered by a small gate, near which, to the surprise of both, the rifle of Natty was leaning against the wall. Hector and the slut reposed on the grass by its side, as if conscious that, however altered, they were lying on the ground and were surrounded by objects with which they were familiar. The hunter himself was stretched on the earth, before a head-stone of white marble, pushing aside with his fingers the long grass that had already sprung up from the luxuriant soil around its base, apparently to lay bare the inscription. By the side of this stone, which was a simple slab at the head of a grave, stood a rich monument, decorated with an urn and ornamented with the chisel.

Oliver and Elizabeth approached the graves with a light tread, unheard by the old hunter, whose sunburnt face was working, and whose eyes twinkled as if something impeded their vision. After some little time Natty raised himself slowly from the ground, and said aloud:

"Well, well—I'm bold to say it's all right! There's something that I suppose is reading; but I can't make anything of it; though the pipe and the tomahawk, and the moccasins, be pretty well—pretty well, for a man that, I dares to say, never seed 'ither of the things. Ah's me! there they lie, side by side, happy enough! Who will there be to put me in the 'arth when my time comes?"

"When that unfortunate hour arrives, Natty, friends shall not be wanting to perform the last offices for you," said Oliver, a little touched at the hunter's soliloquy.

The old man turned, without manifesting surprise, for he had got the Indian habits in this particular, and, running his hand under the bottom of his nose, seemed to wipe away his sorrow with the action.

"You've come out to see the graves, children, have ye?" he said; "well, well, they're wholesome sights to young as well as old."

"I hope they are fitted to your liking," said Effingham, "no one has a better right than yourself to be consulted in the matter."

"Why, seeing that I ain't used to fine graves," returned the old man, "it is but little matter consarning my taste. Ye laid the Major's head to the west, and Mohegan's to the east, did ye, lad?"

"At your request it was done."

"It's so best," said the hunter; "they thought they had to journey different ways, children: though there is One greater than all, who'll bring the just together, at His own time, and who'll whiten the skin of a blackamoor, and place him on a footing with princes."

"There is but little reason to doubt that," said Elizabeth, whose decided tones were changed to a soft, melancholy voice; "I trust we shall all meet again, and be happy together."

"Shall we, child, shall we?" exclaimed the hunter, with unusual fervor, "there's comfort in that thought too. But before I go, I should like to know what 'tis you tell these people, that be flocking into the country like pigeons in the spring, of the old Delaware, and of the bravest white man that ever trod the hills?"

Effingham and Elizabeth were surprised at the manner of the Leather-Stocking, which was unusually impressive and solemn; but,

attributing it to the scene, the young man turned to the monument, and read aloud:

"Sacred to the memory of Oliver Effingham Esquire, formally a Major in his B. Majesty's 60th Foot; a soldier of tried valor; a subject of chivalrous loyalty; and a man of honesty. To these virtues he added the graces of a Christian. The morning of his life was spent in honor, wealth, and power; but its evening was obscured by poverty, neglect, and disease, which were alleviated only by the tender care of his old, faithful, and upright friend and attendant Nathaniel Bumpo. His descendants rest this stone to the virtues of the master, and to the enduring gratitude of the servant."

The Leather-Stocking started at the sound of his own name, and a smile of joy illuminated his wrinkled features, as he said:

"And did ye say It, lad? have you then got the old man's name cut in the stone, by the side of his master's! God bless ye, children! 'twas a kind thought, and kindness goes to the heart as Life shortens."

Elizabeth turned her back to the speakers. Effingham made a fruitless effort before he succeeded in saying:

"It is there cut in plain marble; but it should have been written in letters of gold!"

"Show me the name, boy," said Natty, with simple eagerness; "let me see my own name placed in such honor. 'Tis a gin'rous gift to a man who leaves none of his name and family behind him in a country where he has tarried so long."

Effingham guided his finger to the spot, and Natty followed the windings of the letters to the end with deep interest, when he raised himself from the tomb, and said:

"I suppose it's all right; and it's kindly thought, and kindly done! But what have ye put over the red-skin?"

"You shall hear: This stone is raised to the memory of an Indian Chief of the Delaware tribe, who was known by the several names of John Mohegan Mohican——"

"Mo-hee-can, lad, they call theirselves! 'hecan."

"Mohican; and Chingagook——"

"Gach, boy; 'gach-gook; Chingachgook, which interpreted, means Big-sarpent. The name should be set down right, for an Indian's name has always some meaning in it."

"I will see it altered. 'He was the last of his people who continued to inhabit this country; and it may be said of him that his faults were those of an Indian, and his virtues those of a man."

"You never said truer word, Mr. Oliver; ah's me! if you had knowed him as I did, in his prime, in that very battle where the old gentleman, who sleeps by his side saved his life, when them thieves, the Iroquois, had him at the stake, you'd have said all that, and more too. I cut the thongs with this very hand, and gave him my own tomahawk and knife, seeing that the rifle was always my fav'rite weapon. He did lay about him like a man! I met him as I was coming home from the trail, with eleven Mingo scalps on his pole. You needn't shudder, Madam Effingham, for they was all from shaved heads and warriors. When I look about me, at these hills, where I used to could count sometimes twenty smokes, curling over the tree-tops, from the Delaware camps, it raises mournful thoughts, to think that not a red-skin is left of them all; unless it be a drunken vagabond from the Oneidas, or them Yankee Indians, who, they say, be moving up from the seashore; and who belong to none of Gods creatures, to my seeming, being, as it were, neither fish nor flesh—neither white man nor savage. Well, well! the time has come at last, and I must go——"

"Go!" echoed Edwards, "whither do you go?"

The Leather-Stocking; who had imbibed unconsciously, many of the Indian qualities, though he always thought of himself as of a civilized being, compared with even the Delawares, averted his face to conceal the workings of his muscles, as he stooped to lift a large pack from behind the tomb, which he placed deliberately on his shoulders.

"Go!" exclaimed Elizabeth, approaching him with a hurried step; "you should not venture so far in the woods alone, at your time of life, Natty; indeed, it Is Imprudent, He is bent, Effingham, on some distant hunting."

"What Mrs. Effingham tells you is true, Leather-Stocking," said Edwards; "there can be no necessity for your submitting to such hardships now. So throw aside your pack, and confine your hunt to the mountains near us, if you will go."

"Hardship! 'tis a pleasure, children, and the greatest that is left me on this side the grave."

"No, no; you shall not go to such a distance," cried Elizabeth, laying her white hand on his deer-skin pack—"I am right! I feel his camp-kettle, and a canister of powder! He must not be suffered to wander so far from us, Oliver; remember how suddenly Mohegan dropped away."

"I knowed the parting would come hard, children—I knowed it would!" said Natty, "and so I got aside to look at the graves by myself, and thought if I left ye the keep sake which the Major gave me, when we first parted in the woods, ye wouldn't take it unkind, but would know that, let the old man's body go where it might, his feelings stayed behind him."

"This means something more than common," exclaimed the youth. "Where is it, Natty, that you purpose going?"

The hunter drew nigh him with a confident, reasoning air, as If what he had to say would silence all objections, and replied:

"Why, lad, they tell me that on the big lakes there's the best of hunting, and a great range without a white man on it unless it may be one like myself. I'm weary of living in clearings, and where the hammer is sounding in my ears from sunrise to sundown. And though I'm much bound to ye both, children—I wouldn't say it if It was not true—I crave to go into the woods agin—I do."

"Woods!" echoed Elizabeth, trembling with her feelings; "do you not call these endless forests woods?"

"Ah! child, these be nothing to a man that's used to the wilderness. I have took but little comfort sin' your father come on with his settlers; but I wouldn't go far, while the life was in the body that lies under the sod there. But now he's gone, and Chingachgook Is gone; and you be both young and happy. Yes! the big house has rung with merriment this month past! And now I thought was the time to get a little comfort in the close of my days. Woods! indeed! I doesn't call these woods, Madam Effingham, where I lose myself every

day of my life in the clearings.”

“If there be anything wanting to your comfort, name it, Leather-Stocking; if it be attainable it is yours.”

“You mean all for the best, lad, I know; and so does madam, too; but your ways isn't my ways. 'Tis like the dead there, who thought, when the breath was in them, that one went east, and one went west, to find their heavens; but they'll meet at last, and so shall we, children. Yes, and as you've begun, and we shall meet in the land of the just at last.”

“This is so new! so unexpected!” said Elizabeth, in almost breathless excitement; “I had thought you meant to live with us and die with us, Natty.”

“Words are of no avail,” exclaimed her husband: “the habits of forty years are not to be dispossessed by the ties of a day. I know you too well to urge you further, Natty; unless you will let me build you a hut on one of the distant hills, where we can sometimes see you, and know that you are comfortable.”

“Don't fear for the Leather-Stocking, children; God will see that his days be provided for, and his indian happy. I know you mean all for the best, but our ways doesn't agree. I love the woods, and ye relish the face of man; I eat when hungry, and drink when a-dry; and ye keep stated hours and rules; nay, nay, you even over-feed the dogs, lad, from pure kindness; and hounds should be gaunty to run well. The meanest of God's creatures be made for some use, and I'm formed for the wilderness, If ye love me, let me go where my soul craves to be agin!”

The appeal was decisive; and not another word of en treaty for him to remain was then uttered; but Elizabeth bent her head to her bosom and wept, while her husband dashed away the tears from his eyes; and, with hands that almost refused to perform their office, he procured his pocket-book, and extended a parcel of bank-notes to the hunter.

“Take these,” he said, “at least take these; secure them about your person, and in the hour of need they will do you good service.”

The old man took the notes, and examined them with curious eye.

“This, then, is some of the new-fashioned money that they've been making at Albany, out of paper! It can't be worth much to they that hasn't larning! No, no, lad—— take back the stuff; it will do me no service, I took kear to get all the Frenchman's powder afore he broke up, and they say lead grows where I'm going, it isn't even fit for wads, seeing that I use none but leather!—Madam Effingham, let an old man kiss your hand, and wish God's choicest blessings on you and your'n.”

“Once more let me beseech you, stay!” cried Elizabeth. “Do not, Leather-Stocking, leave me to grieve for the man who has twice rescued me from death, and who has served those I love so faithfully. For my sake, if not for your own, stay. I shall see you in those frightful dreams that still haunt my nights, dying in poverty and age, by the side of those terrific beasts you slew. There will be no evil, that sickness, want, and solitude can inflict, that my fancy will not conjure as your fate. Stay with us, old man, if not for your own sake, at least for ours.”

“Such thoughts and bitter dreams, Madam Effingham,” returned the hunter, solemnly, “will never haunt an innocent parson long. They'll pass away with God's pleasure. And if the cat-a-mounts be yet brought to your eyes in sleep, tis not for my sake, but to show you the power of Him that led me there to save you. Trust in God, madam, and your honorable husband, and the thoughts for an old man like me can never be long nor bitter. I pray that the Lord will keep you in mind—the Lord that lives in clearings as well as in the wilderness—and bless you, and all that belong to you, from this time till the great day when the whites shall meet the red-skins in judgement, and justice shall be the law, and not power.”

Elizabeth raised her head, and offered her colorless cheek to his salute, when he lifted his cap and touched it respectfully. His hand was grasped with convulsive fervor by the youth, who continued silent. The hunter prepared himself for his journey, drawing his belt tighter, and wasting his moments in the little reluctant movements of a sorrowful departure. Once or twice he essayed to speak, but a rising in his throat prevented it. At length he shouldered his rifle, and cried with a clear huntsman's call that echoed through the woods: “He-e-e-re, he-e-e-re, pups—away, dogs, away!—ye'll be footsore afore ye see the end of the journey!”

The hounds leaped from the earth at this cry, and scenting around the grave and silent pair, as if conscious of their own destination, they followed humbly at the heels of their master. A short pause succeeded, during which even the youth concealed his face on his grandfather's tomb. When the pride of manhood, however, had sup pressed the feelings of nature, he turned to renew his en treaties, but saw that the cemetery was occupied only by himself and his wife.

“He is gone!” cried Effingham.

Elizabeth raised her face, and saw the old hunter standing looking back for a moment, on the verge of the wood. As he caught their glances, he drew his hard hand hastily across his eyes again, waved it on high for an adieu, and, uttering a forced cry to his dogs, who were crouching at his feet, he entered the forest.

This was the last they ever saw of the Leather-Stocking, whose rapid movements preceded the pursuit which Judge Temple both ordered and conducted. He had gone far toward the setting sun—the foremost in that band of pioneers who are opening the way for the march of the nation across the continent.

# BOOK V

## THE PRAIRIE

### CHAPTER I.

I pray thee, shepherd, if that love or gold,  
Can in this desert place buy entertainment,  
Bring us where we may rest ourselves and feed.  
—As you like it.

Much was said and written, at the time, concerning the policy of adding the vast regions of Louisiana, to the already immense and but half-tenanted territories of the United States. As the warmth of controversy however subsided, and party considerations gave place to more liberal views, the wisdom of the measure began to be generally conceded. It soon became apparent to the meanest capacity, that, while nature had placed a barrier of desert to the extension of our population in the west, the measure had made us the masters of a belt of fertile country, which, in the revolutions of the day, might have become the property of a rival nation. It gave us the sole command of the great thoroughfare of the interior, and placed the countless tribes of savages, who lay along our borders, entirely within our control; it reconciled conflicting rights, and quieted national distrusts; it opened a thousand avenues to the inland trade, and to the waters of the Pacific; and, if ever time or necessity shall require a peaceful division of this vast empire, it assures us of a neighbour that will possess our language, our religion, our institutions, and it is also to be hoped, our sense of political justice.

Although the purchase was made in 1803, the spring of the succeeding year was permitted to open, before the official prudence of the Spaniard, who held the province for his European master, admitted the authority, or even of the entrance of its new proprietors. But the forms of the transfer were no sooner completed, and the new government acknowledged, than swarms of that restless people, which is ever found hovering on the skirts of American society, plunged into the thickets that fringed the right bank of the Mississippi, with the same careless hardihood, as had already sustained so many of them in their toilsome progress from the Atlantic states, to the eastern shores of the “father of rivers.”[\*]

[\*] The Mississippi is thus termed in several of the Indian languages. The reader will gain a more just idea of the importance of this stream, if he recalls to mind the fact, that the Missouri and the Mississippi are properly the same river. Their united lengths cannot be greatly short of four thousand miles.

Time was necessary to blend the numerous and affluent colonists of the lower province with their new compatriots; but the thinner and more humble population above, was almost immediately swallowed in the vortex which attended the tide of instant emigration. The inroad from the east was a new and sudden out-breaking of a people, who had endured a momentary restraint, after having been rendered nearly resistless by success. The toils and hazards of former undertakings were forgotten, as these endless and unexplored regions, with all their fancied as well as real advantages, were laid open to their enterprise. The consequences were such as might easily have been anticipated, from so tempting an offering, placed, as it was, before the eyes of a race long trained in adventure and nurtured in difficulties.

Thousands of the elders, of what were then called the New States[+], broke up from the enjoyment of their hard-earned indulgences, and were to be seen leading long files of descendants, born and reared in the forests of Ohio and Kentucky, deeper into the land, in quest of that which might be termed, without the aid of poetry, their natural and more congenial atmosphere. The distinguished and resolute forester who first penetrated the wilds of the latter state, was of the number. This adventurous and venerable patriarch was now seen making his last remove; placing the “endless river” between him and the multitude his own success had drawn around him, and seeking for the renewal of enjoyments which were rendered worthless in his eyes, when trammelled by the forms of human institutions.[+]

[\*] All the states admitted to the American Union, since the revolution, are called New States, with the exception of Vermont: that had claims before the war; which were not, however, admitted until a later day.

[+] Colonel Boon, the patriarch of Kentucky. This venerable and hardy pioneer of civilisation emigrated to an estate three hundred miles west of the Mississippi, in his ninety-second year, because he found a population of ten to the square mile, inconveniently crowded!

In the pursuit of adventures such as these, men are ordinarily governed by their habits or deluded by their wishes. A few, led by the phantoms of hope, and ambitious of sudden affluence, sought the mines of the virgin territory; but by far the greater portion of the emigrants were satisfied to establish themselves along the margins of the larger water-courses, content with the rich returns that the generous, alluvial, bottoms of the rivers never fail to bestow on the most desultory industry. In this manner were communities formed with magical rapidity; and most of those who witnessed the purchase of the empty empire, have lived to see already a populous and sovereign state, parcelled from its inhabitants, and received into the bosom of the national Union, on terms of political equality.

The incidents and scenes which are connected with this legend, occurred in the earliest periods of the enterprises which have led to so great and so speedy a result.

The harvest of the first year of our possession had long been passed, and the fading foliage of a few scattered trees was already beginning to exhibit the hues and tints of autumn, when a train of wagons issued from the bed of a dry rivulet, to pursue its course across the undulating surface, of what, in the language of the country of which we write, is called a “rolling prairie.” The vehicles, loaded with household goods and implements of husbandry, the few straggling sheep and cattle that were herded in the rear, and the rugged appearance and careless mien of the sturdy men who loitered at the sides of the lingering teams, united to announce a band of emigrants seeking for the Eldorado of the West. Contrary to the usual practice of the men of their caste, this party had left the fertile bottoms of the low country, and had found its way, by means only known to such adventurers, across glen and torrent, over deep

morasses and arid wastes, to a point far beyond the usual limits of civilised habitations. In their front were stretched those broad plains, which extend, with so little diversity of character, to the bases of the Rocky Mountains; and many long and dreary miles in their rear, foamed the swift and turbid waters of La Platte.

The appearance of such a train, in that bleak and solitary place, was rendered the more remarkable by the fact, that the surrounding country offered so little, that was tempting to the cupidity of speculation, and, if possible, still less that was flattering to the hopes of an ordinary settler of new lands.

The meagre herbage of the prairie, promised nothing, in favour of a hard and unyielding soil, over which the wheels of the vehicles rattled as lightly as if they travelled on a beaten road; neither wagons nor beasts making any deeper impression, than to mark that bruised and withered grass, which the cattle plucked, from time to time, and as often rejected, as food too sour, for even hunger to render palatable.

Whatever might be the final destination of these adventurers, or the secret causes of their apparent security in so remote and unprotected a situation, there was no visible sign of uneasiness, uncertainty, or alarm, among them. Including both sexes, and every age, the number of the party exceeded twenty.

At some little distance in front of the whole, marched the individual, who, by his position and air, appeared to be the leader of the band. He was a tall, sun-burnt, man, past the middle age, of a dull countenance and listless manner. His frame appeared loose and flexible; but it was vast, and in reality of prodigious power. It was, only at moments, however, as some slight impediment opposed itself to his loitering progress, that his person, which, in its ordinary gait seemed so lounging and nerveless, displayed any of those energies, which lay latent in his system, like the slumbering and unwieldy, but terrible, strength of the elephant. The inferior lineaments of his countenance were coarse, extended and vacant; while the superior, or those nobler parts which are thought to affect the intellectual being, were low, receding and mean.

The dress of this individual was a mixture of the coarsest vestments of a husbandman with the leathern garments, that fashion as well as use, had in some degree rendered necessary to one engaged in his present pursuits. There was, however, a singular and wild display of prodigal and ill judged ornaments, blended with his motley attire. In place of the usual deer-skin belt, he wore around his body a tarnished silken sash of the most gaudy colours; the buck-horn haft of his knife was profusely decorated with plates of silver; the marten's fur of his cap was of a fineness and shadowing that a queen might covet; the buttons of his rude and soiled blanket-coat were of the glittering coinage of Mexico; the stock of his rifle was of beautiful mahogany, riveted and banded with the same precious metal, and the trinkets of no less than three worthless watches dangled from different parts of his person. In addition to the pack and the rifle which were slung at his back, together with the well filled, and carefully guarded pouch and horn, he had carelessly cast a keen and bright wood-axe across his shoulder, sustaining the weight of the whole with as much apparent ease, as if he moved, unfettered in limb, and free from incumbrance.

A short distance in the rear of this man, came a group of youths very similarly attired, and bearing sufficient resemblance to each other, and to their leader, to distinguish them as the children of one family. Though the youngest of their number could not much have passed the period, that, in the nicer judgment of the law, is called the age of discretion, he had proved himself so far worthy of his progenitors as to have reared already his aspiring person to the standard height of his race. There were one or two others, of different mould, whose descriptions must however be referred to the regular course of the narrative.

Of the females, there were but two who had arrived at womanhood; though several white-headed, olive-skinned faces were peering out of the foremost wagon of the train, with eyes of lively curiosity and characteristic animation. The elder of the two adults, was the sallow and wrinkled mother of most of the party, and the younger was a sprightly, active, girl, of eighteen, who in figure, dress, and mien, seemed to belong to a station in society several gradations above that of any one of her visible associates. The second vehicle was covered with a top of cloth so tightly drawn, as to conceal its contents, with the nicest care. The remaining wagons were loaded with such rude furniture and other personal effects, as might be supposed to belong to one, ready at any moment to change his abode, without reference to season or distance.

Perhaps there was little in this train, or in the appearance of its proprietors, that is not daily to be encountered on the highways of this changeable and moving country. But the solitary and peculiar scenery, in which it was so unexpectedly exhibited, gave to the party a marked character of wildness and adventure.

In the little valleys, which, in the regular formation of the land, occurred at every mile of their progress, the view was bounded, on two of the sides, by the gradual and low elevations, which gave name to the description of prairie we have mentioned; while on the others, the meagre prospect ran off in long, narrow, barren perspectives, but slightly relieved by a pitiful show of coarse, though somewhat luxuriant vegetation. From the summits of the swells, the eye became fatigued with the sameness and chilling dreariness of the landscape. The earth was not unlike the Ocean, when its restless waters are heaving heavily, after the agitation and fury of the tempest have begun to lessen. There was the same waving and regular surface, the same absence of foreign objects, and the same boundless extent to the view. Indeed so very striking was the resemblance between the water and the land, that, however much the geologist might sneer at so simple a theory, it would have been difficult for a poet not to have felt, that the formation of the one had been produced by the subsiding dominion of the other. Here and there a tall tree rose out of the bottoms, stretching its naked branches abroad, like some solitary vessel; and, to strengthen the delusion, far in the distance, appeared two or three rounded thickets, looming in the misty horizon like islands resting on the waters. It is unnecessary to warn the practised reader, that the sameness of the surface, and the low stands of the spectators, exaggerated the distances; but, as swell appeared after swell, and island succeeded island, there was a disheartening assurance that long, and seemingly interminable, tracts of territory must be passed, before the wishes of the humblest agriculturist could be realised.

Still, the leader of the emigrants steadily pursued his way, with no other guide than the sun, turning his back resolutely on the abodes of civilisation, and plunging, at each step, more deeply if not irretrievably, into the haunts of the barbarous and savage occupants of the country. As the day drew nigher to a close, however, his mind, which was, perhaps, incapable of maturing any connected system of

forethought, beyond that which related to the interests of the present moment, became, in some slight degree, troubled with the care of providing for the wants of the hours of darkness.

On reaching the crest of a swell that was a little higher than the usual elevations, he lingered a minute, and cast a half curious eye, on either hand, in quest of those well known signs, which might indicate a place, where the three grand requisites of water, fuel and fodder were to be obtained in conjunction.

It would seem that his search was fruitless; for after a few moments of indolent and listless examination, he suffered his huge frame to descend the gentle declivity, in the same sluggish manner that an over fattened beast would have yielded to the downward pressure.

His example was silently followed by those who succeeded him, though not until the young men had manifested much more of interest, if not of concern in the brief enquiry, which each, in his turn, made on gaining the same look-out. It was now evident, by the tardy movements both of beasts and men, that the time of necessary rest was not far distant. The matted grass of the lower land, presented obstacles which fatigue began to render formidable, and the whip was becoming necessary to urge the lingering teams to their labour. At this moment, when, with the exception of the principal individual, a general lassitude was getting the mastery of the travellers, and every eye was cast, by a sort of common impulse, wistfully forward, the whole party was brought to a halt, by a spectacle, as sudden as it was unexpected.

The sun had fallen below the crest of the nearest wave of the prairie, leaving the usual rich and glowing train on its track. In the centre of this flood of fiery light, a human form appeared, drawn against the gilded background, as distinctly, and seemingly as palpable, as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand. The figure was colossal; the attitude musing and melancholy, and the situation directly in the route of the travellers. But imbedded, as it was, in its setting of garish light, it was impossible to distinguish its just proportions or true character.

The effect of such a spectacle was instantaneous and powerful. The man in front of the emigrants came to a stand, and remained gazing at the mysterious object, with a dull interest, that soon quickened into superstitious awe. His sons, so soon as the first emotions of surprise had a little abated, drew slowly around him, and, as they who governed the teams gradually followed their example, the whole party was soon condensed in one, silent, and wondering group. Notwithstanding the impression of a supernatural agency was very general among the travellers, the ticking of gun-locks was heard, and one or two of the bolder youths cast their rifles forward, in readiness for service.

"Send the boys off to the right," exclaimed the resolute wife and mother, in a sharp, dissonant voice; "I warrant me, Asa, or Abner will give some account of the creature!"

"It may be well enough, to try the rifle," muttered a dull looking man, whose features, both in outline and expression, bore no small resemblance to the first speaker, and who loosened the stock of his piece and brought it dexterously to the front, while delivering this opinion; "the Pawnee Loups are said to be hunting by hundreds in the plains; if so, they'll never miss a single man from their tribe."

"Stay!" exclaimed a soft toned, but alarmed female voice, which was easily to be traced to the trembling lips of the younger of the two women; "we are not altogether; it may be a friend!"

"Who is scouting, now?" demanded the father, scanning, at the same time, the cluster of his stout sons, with a displeased and sullen eye. "Put by the piece, put by the piece;" he continued, diverting the other's aim, with the finger of a giant, and with the air of one it might be dangerous to deny. "My job is not yet ended; let us finish the little that remains, in peace."

The man, who had manifested so hostile an intention, appeared to understand the other's allusion, and suffered himself to be diverted from his object. The sons turned their inquiring looks on the girl, who had so eagerly spoken, to require an explanation; but, as if content with the respite she had obtained for the stranger, she sunk back, in her seat, and chose to affect a maidenly silence.

In the mean time, the hues of the heavens had often changed. In place of the brightness, which had dazzled the eye, a gray and more sober light had succeeded, and as the setting lost its brilliancy, the proportions of the fanciful form became less exaggerated, and finally distinct. Ashamed to hesitate, now that the truth was no longer doubtful, the leader of the party resumed his journey, using the precaution, as he ascended the slight acclivity, to release his own rifle from the strap, and to cast it into a situation more convenient for sudden use.

There was little apparent necessity, however, for such watchfulness. From the moment when it had thus unaccountably appeared, as it were, between the heavens and the earth, the stranger's figure had neither moved nor given the smallest evidence of hostility. Had he harboured any such evil intention, the individual who now came plainly into view, seemed but little qualified to execute them.

A frame that had endured the hardships of more than eighty seasons, was not qualified to awaken apprehension, in the breast of one as powerful as the emigrant. Notwithstanding his years, and his look of emaciation, if not of suffering, there was that about this solitary being, however, which said that time, and not disease, had laid his hand heavily on him. His form had withered, but it was not wasted. The sinews and muscles, which had once denoted great strength, though shrunken, were still visible; and his whole figure had attained an appearance of induration, which, if it were not for the well known frailty of humanity, would have seemed to bid defiance to the further approaches of decay. His dress was chiefly of skins, worn with the hair to the weather; a pouch and horn were suspended from his shoulders; and he leaned on a rifle of uncommon length, but which, like its owner, exhibited the wear of long and hard service.

As the party drew nigher to this solitary being, and came within a distance to be heard, a low growl issued from the grass at his feet, and then, a tall, gaunt, toothless, hound, arose lazily from his lair, and shaking himself, made some show of resisting the nearer approach of the travellers.

"Down, Hector, down," said his master, in a voice, that was a little tremulous and hollow with age. "What have ye to do, pup, with men who journey on their lawful callings?"

"Stranger, if you ar' much acquainted in this country," said the leader of the emigrants, "can you tell a traveller where he may find necessities for the night?"



“Is the land filled on the other side of the Big River?” demanded the old man, solemnly, and without appearing to hearken to the other's question; “or why do I see a sight, I had never thought to behold again?”

“Why, there is country left, it is true, for such as have money, and ar' not particular in the choice,” returned the emigrant; “but to my taste, it is getting crowdy. What may a man call the distance, from this place to the nighest point on the main river?”

“A hunted deer could not cool his sides, in the Mississippi, without travelling a weary five hundred miles.”

“And what may you name the district, hereaway?”

“By what name,” returned the old man, pointing significantly upward, “would you call the spot, where you see yonder cloud?”

The emigrant looked at the other, like one who did not comprehend his meaning, and who half suspected he was trifled with, but he contented himself by saying—

“You ar' but a new inhabitant, like myself, I reckon, stranger, otherwise you would not be backward in helping a traveller to some advice; words cost but little, and sometimes lead to friendships.”

“Advice is not a gift, but a debt that the old owe to the young. What would you wish to know?”

“Where I may camp for the night. I'm no great difficulty maker, as to bed and board; but, all old journeyers, like myself, know the virtue of sweet water, and a good browse for the cattle.”

“Come then with me, and you shall be master of both; and little more is it that I can offer on this hungry prairie.”

As the old man was speaking, he raised his heavy rifle to his shoulder, with a facility a little remarkable for his years and appearance, and without further words led the way over the acclivity to the adjacent bottom.

## CHAPTER II

Up with my tent: here will I lie to-night,  
But where, to-morrow?—Well, all's one for that  
—Richard the Third.

The travellers soon discovered the usual and unerring evidences that the several articles necessary to their situation were not far distant. A clear and gurgling spring burst out of the side of the declivity, and joining its waters to those of other similar little fountains in its vicinity, their united contributions formed a run, which was easily to be traced, for miles along the prairie, by the scattering foliage and verdure which occasionally grew within the influence of its moisture. Hither, then, the stranger held his way, eagerly followed by the willing teams, whose instinct gave them a prescience of refreshment and rest.

On reaching what he deemed a suitable spot, the old man halted, and with an enquiring look, he seemed to demand if it possessed the needed conveniences. The leader of the emigrants cast his eyes, understandingly, about him, and examined the place with the keenness of one competent to judge of so nice a question, though in that dilatory and heavy manner, which rarely permitted him to betray precipitation.

“Ay, this may do,” he said, satisfied with his scrutiny; “boys, you have seen the last of the sun; be stirring.”

The young men manifested a characteristic obedience. The order, for such in tone and manner it was, in truth, was received with respect; but the utmost movement was the falling of an axe or two from the shoulder to the ground, while their owners continued to regard the place with listless and incurious eyes. In the mean time, the elder traveller, as if familiar with the nature of the impulses by which his children were governed, disencumbered himself of his pack and rifle, and, assisted by the man already mentioned as disposed to appeal so promptly to the rifle, he quietly proceeded to release the cattle from the gears.

At length the eldest of the sons stepped heavily forward, and, without any apparent effort, he buried his axe to the eye, in the soft body of a cotton-wood tree. He stood, a moment, regarding the effect of the blow, with that sort of contempt with which a giant might be supposed to contemplate the puny resistance of a dwarf, and then flourishing the implement above his head, with the grace and dexterity with which a master of the art of offence would wield his nobler though less useful weapon, he quickly severed the trunk of the tree, bringing its tall top crashing to the earth in submission to his prowess. His companions regarded the operation with indolent curiosity, until they saw the prostrate trunk stretched on the ground, when, as if a signal for a general attack had been given, they advanced in a body to the work, and in a space of time, and with a neatness of execution that would have astonished an ignorant spectator, they stripped a small but suitable spot of its burden of forest, as effectually, and almost as promptly, as if a whirlwind had passed along the place.

The stranger had been a silent but attentive observer of their progress. As tree after tree came whistling down, he cast his eyes upward at the vacancies they left in the heavens, with a melancholy gaze, and finally turned away, muttering to himself with a bitter smile, like one who disdained giving a more audible utterance to his discontent. Pressing through the group of active and busy children, who had already lighted a cheerful fire, the attention of the old man became next fixed on the movements of the leader of the emigrants and of his savage looking assistant.

These two had, already, liberated the cattle, which were eagerly browsing the grateful and nutritious extremities of the fallen trees, and were now employed about the wagon, which has been described as having its contents concealed with so much apparent care. Notwithstanding this particular conveyance appeared to be as silent, and as tenantless as the rest of the vehicles, the men applied their strength to its wheels, and rolled it apart from the others, to a dry and elevated spot, near the edge of the thicket. Here they brought certain poles, which had, seemingly, been long employed in such a service, and fastening their larger ends firmly in the ground, the smaller were attached to the hoops that supported the covering of the wagon. Large folds of cloth were next drawn out of the vehicle, and after being spread around the whole, were pegged to the earth in such a manner as to form a tolerably capacious and an exceedingly convenient tent. After surveying their work with inquisitive, and perhaps jealous eyes, arranging a fold here, and driving a peg more firmly there, the men once more applied their strength to the wagon, pulling it, by its projecting tongue, from the centre of the canopy, until it appeared in the open air, deprived of its covering, and destitute of any other freight, than a few light articles of furniture. The latter were immediately removed, by the traveller, into the tent with his own hands, as though to enter it, were a privilege, to which even his bosom companion was not entitled.

Curiosity is a passion that is rather quickened than destroyed by seclusion, and the old inhabitant of the prairies did not view these precautionary and mysterious movements, without experiencing some of its impulses. He approached the tent, and was about to sever two of its folds, with the very obvious intention of examining, more closely, into the nature of its contents, when the man who had once already placed his life in jeopardy, seized him by the arm, and with a rude exercise of his strength threw him from the spot he had selected as the one most convenient for his object.

“It’s an honest regulation, friend,” the fellow, drily observed, though with an eye that threatened volumes, “and sometimes it is a safe one, which says, mind your own business.”

“Men seldom bring any thing to be concealed into these deserts,” returned the old man, as if willing, and yet a little ignorant how to apologize for the liberty he had been about to take, “and I had hoped no offence, in examining your comforts.”

“They seldom bring themselves, I reckon; though this has the look of an old country, to my eye it seems not to be overly peopled.”

“The land is as aged as the rest of the works of the Lord, I believe; but you say true, concerning its inhabitants. Many months have passed since I have laid eyes on a face of my own colour, before your own. I say again, friend, I meant no harm; I did not know, but

there was something behind the cloth, that might bring former days to my mind.”

As the stranger ended his simple explanation, he walked meekly away, like one who felt the deepest sense of the right which every man has to the quiet enjoyment of his own, without any troublesome interference on the part of his neighbour; a wholesome and just principle that he had, also, most probably imbibed from the habits of his secluded life. As he passed towards the little encampment of the emigrants, for such the place had now become, he heard the voice of the leader calling aloud, in its hoarse tones, the name of—

“Ellen Wade.”

The girl who has been already introduced to the reader, and who was occupied with the others of her sex around the fires, sprang willingly forward at this summons; and, passing the stranger with the activity of a young antelope, she was instantly lost behind the forbidden folds of the tent. Neither her sudden disappearance, nor any of the arrangements we have mentioned, seemed, however, to excite the smallest surprise among the remainder of the party. The young men, who had already completed their tasks with the axe, were all engaged after their lounging and listless manner; some in bestowing equitable portions of the fodder among the different animals; others in plying the heavy pestle of a moveable homminy-mortar[\*]; and one or two in wheeling the remainder of the wagons aside, and arranging them in such a manner as to form a sort of outwork for their otherwise defenceless bivouac.

[\*] Homminy, is a dish composed chiefly of cracked corn, or maize.

These several duties were soon performed, and, as darkness now began to conceal the objects on the surrounding prairie, the shrill-toned termagant, whose voice since the halt had been diligently exercised among her idle and drowsy offspring, announced, in tones that might have been heard at a dangerous distance, that the evening meal waited only for the approach of those who were to consume it. Whatever may be the other qualities of a border man, he is seldom deficient in the virtue of hospitality. The emigrant no sooner heard the sharp call of his wife, than he cast his eyes about him in quest of the stranger, in order to offer him the place of distinction, in the rude entertainment to which they were so unceremoniously summoned.

"I thank you, friend," the old man replied to the rough invitation to take a seat nigh the smoking kettle; "you have my hearty thanks; but I have eaten for the day, and am not one of them, who dig their graves with their teeth. Well; as you wish it, I will take a place, for it is long sin' I have seen people of my colour, eating their daily bread."

"You ar' an old settler, in these districts, then?" the emigrant rather remarked than enquired, with a mouth filled nearly to overflowing with the delicious homminy, prepared by his skilful, though repulsive spouse. "They told us below, we should find settlers something thinnish, hereaway, and I must say, the report was mainly true; for, unless, we count the Canada traders on the big river, you ar' the first white face I have met, in a good five hundred miles; that is calculating according to your own reckoning."

"Though I have spent some years, in this quarter, I can hardly be called a settler, seeing that I have no regular abode, and seldom pass more than a month, at a time, on the same range."

"A hunter, I reckon?" the other continued, glancing his eyes aside, as if to examine the equipments of his new acquaintance; "your fixen seem none of the best, for such a calling."

"They are old, and nearly ready to be laid aside, like their master," said the old man, regarding his rifle, with a look in which affection and regret were singularly blended; "and I may say they are but little needed, too. You are mistaken, friend, in calling me a hunter; I am nothing better than a trapper."[\*]

[\*] It is scarcely necessary to say, that this American word means one who takes his game in a trap. It is of general use on the frontiers. The beaver, an animal too sagacious to be easily killed, is oftener taken in this way than in any other.

"If you ar' much of the one, I'm bold to say you ar' something of the other; for the two callings, go mainly together, in these districts."

"To the shame of the man who is able to follow the first be it so said!" returned the trapper, whom in future we shall choose to designate by his pursuit; "for more than fifty years did I carry my rifle in the wilderness, without so much as setting a snare for even a bird that flies the heavens;—much less, a beast that has nothing but legs, for its gifts."

"I see but little difference whether a man gets his peltry by the rifle or by the trap," said the ill-looking companion of the emigrant, in his rough manner. "The 'arth was made for our comfort; and, for that matter, so ar' its creatur's."

"You seem to have but little plunder,[\*] stranger, for one who is far abroad," bluntly interrupted the emigrant, as if he had a reason for wishing to change the conversation. "I hope you ar' better off for skins."

[\*] The cant word for luggage in the western states of America is "plunder." The term might easily mislead one as to the character of the people, who, notwithstanding their pleasant use of so expressive a word, are, like the inhabitants of all new settlements, hospitable and honest. Knavery of the description conveyed by "plunder," is chiefly found in regions more civilised.

"I make but little use of either," the trapper quietly replied. "At my time of life, food and clothing be all that is needed; and I have little occasion for what you call plunder, unless it may be, now and then, to barter for a horn of powder, or a bar of lead."

"You ar' not, then, of these parts by natur', friend," the emigrant continued, having in his mind the exception which the other had taken to the very equivocal word, which he himself, according to the custom of the country, had used for "baggage," or "effects."

"I was born on the sea-shore, though most of my life has been passed in the woods."

The whole party now looked up at him, as men are apt to turn their eyes on some unexpected object of general interest. One or two of the young men repeated the words "sea-shore" and the woman tendered him one of those civilities with which, uncouth as they were, she was little accustomed to grace her hospitality, as if in deference to the travelled dignity of her guest. After a long, and, seemingly, a meditating silence, the emigrant, who had, however, seen no apparent necessity to suspend the functions of his masticating powers, resumed the discourse.

"It is a long road, as I have heard, from the waters of the west to the shores of the main sea?"

"It is a weary path, indeed, friend; and much have I seen, and something have I suffered, in journeying over it."

"A man would see a good deal of hard travel in going its length!"

"Seventy and five years have I been upon the road; and there are not half that number of leagues in the whole distance, after you leave the Hudson, on which I have not tasted venison of my own killing. But this is vain boasting. Of what use are former deeds, when time draws to an end?"

"I once met a man that had boated on the river he names," observed the eldest son, speaking in a low tone of voice, like one who distrusted his knowledge, and deemed it prudent to assume a becoming diffidence in the presence of a man who had seen so much: "from his tell, it must be a considerable stream, and deep enough for a keel-boat, from top to bottom."

"It is a wide and deep water-course, and many sightly towns are there growing on its banks," returned the trapper; "and yet it is but a brook to the waters of the endless river."

"I call nothing a stream that a man can travel round," exclaimed the ill-looking associate of the emigrant: "a real river must be crossed; not headed, like a bear in a county hunt."[\*]

[\*] There is a practice, in the new countries, to assemble the men of a large district, sometimes of an entire county, to exterminate the beasts of prey. They form themselves into a circle of several miles in extent, and gradually draw nearer, killing all before them. The allusion is to this custom, in which the hunted beast is turned from one to another.

"Have you been far towards the sun-down, friend?" interrupted the emigrant, as if he desired to keep his rough companion as much as possible out of the discourse. "I find it is a wide tract of clearing, this, into which I have fallen."

"You may travel weeks, and you will see it the same. I often think the Lord has placed this barren belt of prairie behind the States, to warn men to what their folly may yet bring the land! Ay, weeks, if not months, may you journey in these open fields, in which there is neither dwelling nor habitation for man or beast. Even the savage animals travel miles on miles to seek their dens; and yet the wind seldom blows from the east, but I conceit the sound of axes, and the crash of falling trees, are in my ears."

As the old man spoke with the seriousness and dignity that age seldom fails to communicate even to less striking sentiments, his auditors were deeply attentive, and as silent as the grave. Indeed, the trapper was left to renew the dialogue himself, which he soon did by asking a question, in the indirect manner so much in use by the border inhabitants.

"You found it no easy matter to ford the water-courses, and to make your way so deep into the prairies, friend, with teams of horses and herds of horned beasts?"

"I kept the left bank of the main river," the emigrant replied, "until I found the stream leading too much to the north, when we rafted ourselves across without any great suffering. The women lost a fleece or two from the next year's shearing, and the girls have one cow less to their dairy. Since then, we have done bravely, by bridging a creek every day or two."

"It is likely you will continue west, until you come to land more suitable for a settlement?"

"Until I see reason to stop, or to turn ag'in," the emigrant bluntly answered, rising at the same time, and cutting short the dialogue by the suddenness of the movement. His example was followed by the trapper, as well as the rest of the party; and then, without much deference to the presence of their guest, the travellers proceeded to make their dispositions to pass the night. Several little bowers, or rather huts, had already been formed of the tops of trees, blankets of coarse country manufacture, and the skins of buffaloes, united without much reference to any other object than temporary comfort. Into these covers the children, with their mother, soon drew themselves, and where, it is more than possible, they were all speedily lost in the oblivion of sleep. Before the men, however, could seek their rest, they had sundry little duties to perform; such as completing their works of defence, carefully concealing the fires, replenishing the fodder of their cattle, and setting the watch that was to protect the party, in the approaching hours of night.

The former was effected by dragging the trunks of a few trees into the intervals left by the wagons, and along the open space between the vehicles and the thicket, on which, in military language, the encampment would be said to have rested; thus forming a sort of chevaux-de-frise on three sides of the position. Within these narrow limits (with the exception of what the tent contained), both man and beast were now collected; the latter being far too happy in resting their weary limbs, to give any undue annoyance to their scarcely more intelligent associates. Two of the young men took their rifles; and, first renewing the priming, and examining the flints with the utmost care, they proceeded, the one to the extreme right, and the other to the left, of the encampment, where they posted themselves within the shadows of the thicket; but in such positions as enabled each to overlook a portion of the prairie.

The trapper loitered about the place, declining to share the straw of the emigrant, until the whole arrangement was completed; and then, without the ceremony of an adieu, he slowly retired from the spot.

It was now in the first watch of the night; and the pale, quivering, and deceptive light, from a new moon, was playing over the endless waves of the prairie, tipping the swells with gleams of brightness, and leaving the interval land in deep shadow. Accustomed to scenes of solitude like the present, the old man, as he left the encampment, proceeded alone into the waste, like a bold vessel leaving its haven to enter on the trackless field of the ocean. He appeared to move for some time without object, or, indeed, without any apparent consciousness, whither his limbs were carrying him. At length, on reaching the rise of one of the undulations, he came to a stand; and, for the first time since leaving the band, who had caused such a flood of reflections and recollections to crowd upon his mind, the old man became aware of his present situation. Throwing one end of his rifle to the earth, he stood leaning on the other, again lost in deep contemplation for several minutes, during which time his hound came and crouched at his feet. A deep, menacing growl, from the faithful animal, first aroused him from his musing.

"What now, dog?" he said, looking down at his companion, as if he addressed a being of an intelligence equal to his own, and speaking in a voice of great affection. "What is it, pup? ha! Hector; what is it nosing, now? It won't do, dog; it won't do; the very fa'ns play in open view of us, without minding so worn out curs, as you and I. Instinct is their gift, Hector and, they have found out how little we are to be feared, they have!"

The dog stretched his head upward, and responded to the words of his master by a long and plaintive whine, which he even continued after he had again buried his head in the grass, as if he held an intelligent communication with one who so well knew how to interpret dumb discourse.

"This is a manifest warning, Hector!" the trapper continued, dropping his voice, to the tones of caution and looking warily about him. "What is it, pup; speak plainer, dog; what is it?"

The hound had, however, already laid his nose to the earth, and was silent; appearing to slumber. But the keen quick glances of his master, soon caught a glimpse of a distant figure, which seemed, through the deceptive light, floating along the very elevation on which he had placed himself. Presently its proportions became more distinct, and then an airy, female form appeared to hesitate, as if considering whether it would be prudent to advance. Though the eyes of the dog were now to be seen glancing in the rays of the moon, opening and shutting lazily, he gave no further signs of displeasure.

"Come nigher; we are friends," said the trapper, associating himself with his companion by long use, and, probably, through the strength of the secret tie that connected them together; "we are your friends; none will harm you."

Encouraged by the mild tones of his voice, and perhaps led on by the earnestness of her purpose, the female approached, until she stood at his side; when the old man perceived his visitor to be the young woman, with whom the reader, has already become acquainted by the name of "Ellen Wade."

"I had thought you were gone," she said, looking timidly and anxiously around. "They said you were gone; and that we should never see you again. I did not think it was you!"

"Men are no common objects in these empty fields," returned the trapper, "and I humbly hope, though I have so long consorted with the beasts of the wilderness, that I have not yet lost the look of my kind."

"Oh! I knew you to be a man, and I thought I knew the whine of the hound, too," she answered hastily, as if willing to explain she knew not what, and then checking herself, like one fearful of having already said too much.

"I saw no dogs, among the teams of your father," the trapper remarked.

"Father!" exclaimed the girl, feelingly, "I have no father! I had nearly said no friend."

The old man turned towards her, with a look of kindness and interest, that was even more conciliating than the ordinary, upright, and benevolent expression of his weather-beaten countenance.

"Why then do you venture in a place where none but the strong should come?" he demanded. "Did you not know that, when you crossed the big river, you left a friend behind you that is always bound to look to the young and feeble, like yourself."

"Of whom do you speak?"

"The law—'tis bad to have it, but, I sometimes think, it is worse to be entirely without it. Age and weakness have brought me to feel such weakness, at times. Yes—yes, the law is needed, when such as have not the gifts of strength and wisdom are to be taken care of. I hope, young woman, if you have no father, you have at least a brother."

The maiden felt the tacit reproach conveyed in this covert question, and for a moment she remained in an embarrassed silence. But catching a glimpse of the mild and serious features of her companion, as he continued to gaze on her with a look of interest, she replied, firmly, and in a manner that left no doubt she comprehended his meaning:

"Heaven forbid that any such as you have seen, should be a brother of mine, or any thing else near or dear to me! But, tell me, do you then actually live alone, in this desert district, old man; is there really none here besides yourself?"

"There are hundreds, nay, thousands of the rightful owners of the country, roving about the plains; but few of our own colour."

"And have you then met none who are white, but us?" interrupted the girl, like one too impatient to await the tardy explanations of age and deliberation.

"Not in many days—Hush, Hector, hush," he added in reply to a low, and nearly inaudible, growl from his hound. "The dog scents mischief in the wind! The black bears from the mountains sometimes make their way, even lower than this. The pup is not apt to complain of the harmless game. I am not so ready and true with the piece as I used-to-could-be, yet I have struck even the fiercest animals of the prairie in my time; so, you have little reason for fear, young woman."

The girl raised her eyes, in that peculiar manner which is so often practised by her sex, when they commence their glances, by examining the earth at their feet, and terminate them by noting every thing within the power of human vision; but she rather manifested the quality of impatience, than any feeling of alarm.

A short bark from the dog, however, soon gave a new direction to the looks of both, and then the real object of his second warning became dimly visible.

## CHAPTER III

Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy mood, as any in Italy;  
and as soon mov'd to be moody, and as soon moody to be moved.  
—Romeo and Juliet.

Though the trapper manifested some surprise when he perceived that another human figure was approaching him, and that, too, from a direction opposite to the place where the emigrant had made his encampment, it was with the steadiness of one long accustomed to scenes of danger.

“This is a man,” he said; “and one who has white blood in his veins, or his step would be lighter. It will be well to be ready for the worst, as the half-and-halves,[\*] that one meets, in these distant districts, are altogether more barbarous than the real savage.”

[\*] Half-breeds; men born of Indian women by white fathers. This race has much of the depravity of civilisation without the virtues of the savage.

He raised his rifle while he spoke, and assured himself of the state of its flint, as well as of the priming by manual examination. But his arm was arrested, while in the act of throwing forward the muzzle of the piece, by the eager and trembling hands of his companion.

“For God's sake, be not too hasty,” she said; “it may be a friend—an acquaintance—a neighbour!”

“A friend!” the old man repeated, deliberately releasing himself, at the same time, from her grasp. “Friends are rare in any land, and less in this, perhaps, than in another; and the neighbourhood is too thinly settled to make it likely that he who comes towards us is even an acquaintance.”

“But though a stranger, you would not seek his blood!”

The trapper earnestly regarded her anxious and frightened features, and then he dropped the butt of his rifle on the ground, like one whose purpose had undergone a sudden change.

“No,” he said, speaking rather to himself, than to his companion, “she is right; blood is not to be spilt, to save the life of one so useless, and so near his time. Let him come on; my skins, my traps, and even my rifle shall be his, if he sees fit to demand them.”

“He will ask for neither—he wants neither,” returned the girl; “if he be an honest man, he will surely be content with his own, and ask for nothing that is the property of another.”

The trapper had not time to express the surprise he felt at this incoherent and contradictory language, for the man who was advancing, was, already, within fifty feet of the place where they stood.—In the mean time, Hector had not been an indifferent witness of what was passing. At the sound of the distant footsteps, he had arisen, from his warm bed at the feet of his master; and now, as the stranger appeared in open view, he stalked slowly towards him, crouching to the earth like a panther about to take his leap.

“Call in your dog,” said a firm, deep, manly voice, in tones of friendship, rather than of menace; “I love a hound, and should be sorry to do an injury to the animal.”

“You hear what is said about you, pup?” the trapper answered; “come hither, fool. His growl and his bark are all that is left him now; you may come on, friend; the hound is toothless.”

The stranger profited by the intelligence. He sprang eagerly forward, and at the next instant stood at the side of Ellen Wade. After assuring himself of the identity of the latter, by a hasty but keen glance, he turned his attention, with a quickness and impatience, that proved the interest he took in the result, to a similar examination of her companion.

“From what cloud have you fallen, my good old man?” he said in a careless, off-hand, heedless manner that seemed too natural to be assumed: “or do you actually live, hereaway, in the prairies?”

“I have been long on earth, and never I hope nigher to heaven, than I am at this moment,” returned the trapper; “my dwelling, if dwelling I may be said to have, is not far distant. Now may I take the liberty with you, that you are so willing to take with others? Whence do you come, and where is your home?”

“Softly, softly; when I have done with my catechism, it will be time to begin with yours. What sport is this, you follow by moonlight? You are not dodging the buffaloes at such an hour!”

“I am, as you see, going from an encampment of travellers, which lies over yonder swell in the land, to my own wigwam; in doing so, I wrong no man.”

“All fair and true. And you got this young woman to show you the way, because she knows it so well and you know so little about it yourself!”

“I met her, as I have met you, by accident. For ten tiresome years have I dwelt on these open fields, and never, before to-night, have I found human beings with white skins on them, at this hour. If my presence here gives offence, I am sorry; and will go my way. It is more than likely that when your young friend has told her story, you will be better given to believe mine.

“Friend!” said the youth, lifting a cap of skins from his head, and running his fingers leisurely through a dense mass of black and shaggy locks, “if I have ever laid eyes on the girl before to-night, may I—”

“You've said enough, Paul,” interrupted the female, laying her hand on his mouth, with a familiarity that gave something very like the lie direct, to his intended asseveration. “Our secret will be safe, with this honest old man. I know it by his looks, and kind words.”

“Our secret! Ellen, have you forgot—”

“Nothing. I have not forgotten any thing I should remember. But still I say we are safe with this honest trapper.”

"Trapper! is he then a trapper? Give me your hand, father; our trades should bring us acquainted."

"There is little call for handicrafts in this region," returned the other, examining the athletic and active form of the youth, as he leaned carelessly and not ungracefully, on his rifle; "the art of taking the creature's of God, in traps and nets, is one that needs more cunning than manhood; and yet am I brought to practise it, in my age! But it would be quite as seemly, in one like you, to follow a pursuit better becoming your years and courage."

"I! I never took even a slinking mink or a paddling musk-rat in a cage; though I admit having peppered a few of the dark-skin'd devils, when I had much better have kept my powder in the horn and the lead in its pouch. Not I, old man; nothing that crawls the earth is for my sport."

"What then may you do for a living, friend? for little profit is to be made in these districts, if a man denies himself his lawful right in the beasts of the fields."

"I deny myself nothing. If a bear crosses my path, he is soon the mere ghost of Bruin. The deer begin to nose me; and as for the buffalo, I have kill'd more beef, old stranger, than the largest butcher in all Kentuck."

"You can shoot, then!" demanded the trapper, with a glow of latent fire, glimmering about his eyes; "is your hand true, and your look quick?"

"The first is like a steel trap, and the last nimbler than a buck-shot. I wish it was hot noon, now, grand'ther; and that there was an acre or two of your white swans or of black feathered ducks going south, over our heads; you or Ellen, here, might set your heart on the finest in the flock, and my character against a horn of powder, that the bird would be hanging head downwards, in five minutes, and that too, with a single ball. I scorn a shot-gun! No man can say, he ever knew me carry one, a rod."

"The lad has good in him! I see it plainly by his manner;" said the trapper, turning to Ellen with an encouraging air; "I will take it on myself to say, that you are not unwise in meeting him, as you do. Tell me, lad; did you ever strike a leaping buck atwixt the antlers? Hector; quiet, pup; quiet. The very name of venison quickens the blood of the cur;—did you ever take an animal in that fashion, on the long leap?"

"You might just as well ask me, did you ever eat? There is no fashion, old stranger, that a deer has not been touched by my hand, unless it was when asleep."

"Ay, ay; you have a long and a happy-ay, and an honest life afore you! I am old, and I suppose I might also say, worn out and useless; but, if it was given me to choose my time, and place, again,—as such things are not and ought not ever to be given to the will of man—though if such a gift was to be given me, I would say, twenty and the wilderness! But, tell me; how do you part with the peltry?"

"With my pelts! I never took a skin from a buck, nor a quill from a goose, in my life! I knock them over, now and then, for a meal, and sometimes to keep my finger true to the touch; but when hunger is satisfied, the prairie wolves get the remainder. No—no—I keep to my calling; which pays me better, than all the fur I could sell on the other side of the big river."

The old man appeared to ponder a little; but shaking his head he soon continued—

"I know of but one business that can be followed here with profit—"

He was interrupted by the youth, who raised a small cup of tin, which dangled at his neck before the other's eyes, and springing its lid, the delicious odour of the finest flavoured honey, diffused itself over the organs of the trapper.

"A bee hunter!" observed the latter, with a readiness that proved he understood the nature of the occupation, though not without some little surprise at discovering one of the other's spirited mien engaged in so humble a pursuit. "It pays well in the skirts of the settlements, but I should call it a doubtful trade, in the more open districts."

"You think a tree is wanting for a swarm to settle in! But I know differently; and so I have stretched out a few hundred miles farther west than common, to taste your honey. And, now, I have bated your curiosity, stranger, you will just move aside, while I tell the remainder of my story to this young woman."

"It is not necessary, I'm sure it is not necessary, that he should leave us," said Ellen, with a haste that implied some little consciousness of the singularity if not of the impropriety of the request. "You can have nothing to say that the whole world might not hear."

"No! well, may I be stung to death by drones, if I understand the buzzings of a woman's mind! For my part, Ellen, I care for nothing nor any body; and am just as ready to go down to the place where your uncle, if uncle you can call one, who I'll swear is no relation, has hopped his teams, and tell the old man my mind now, as I shall be a year hence. You have only to say a single word, and the thing is done; let him like it or not."

"You are ever so hasty and so rash, Paul Hover, that I seldom know when I am safe with you. How can you, who know the danger of our being seen together, speak of going before my uncle and his sons?"

"Has he done that of which he has reason to be ashamed?" demanded the trapper, who had not moved an inch from the place he first occupied.

"Heaven forbid! But there are reasons, why he should not be seen, just now, that could do him no harm if known; but which may not yet be told. And, so, if you will wait, father, near yonder willow bush, until I have heard what Paul can possibly have to say, I shall be sure to come and wish you a good night, before I return to the camp."

The trapper drew slowly aside, as if satisfied with the somewhat incoherent reason Ellen had given why he should retire. When completely out of ear shot of the earnest and hurried dialogue, that instantly commenced between the two he had left, the old man again paused, and patiently awaited the moment when he might renew his conversation with beings in whom he felt a growing interest, no less from the mysterious character of their intercourse, than from a natural sympathy in the welfare of a pair so young, and who, as



in the simplicity of his heart he was also fain to believe, were also so deserving. He was accompanied by his indolent, but attached dog, who once more made his bed at the feet of his master, and soon lay slumbering as usual, with his head nearly buried in the dense fog of the prairie grass.

It was a spectacle so unusual to see the human form amid the solitude in which he dwelt, that the trapper bent his eyes on the dim figures of his new acquaintances, with sensations to which he had long been a stranger. Their presence awakened recollections and emotions, to which his sturdy but honest nature had latterly paid but little homage, and his thoughts began to wander over the varied scenes of a life of hardships, that had been strangely blended with scenes of wild and peculiar enjoyment. The train taken by his thoughts had, already, conducted him, in imagination, far into an ideal world, when he was, once more suddenly, recalled to the reality of his situation, by the movements of the faithful hound.

The dog, who, in submission to his years and infirmities, had manifested such a decided propensity to sleep, now arose, and stalked from out the shadow cast by the tall person of his master, and looked abroad into the prairie, as if his instinct apprised him of the presence of still another visitor. Then, seemingly content with his examination, he returned to his comfortable post and disposed of his weary limbs, with the deliberation and care of one who was no novice in the art of self-preservation.

“What; again, Hector!” said the trapper in a soothing voice, which he had the caution, however, to utter in an under tone; “what is it, dog? tell it all to his master, pup; what is it?”

Hector answered with another growl, but was content to continue in his lair. These were evidences of intelligence and distrust, to which one as practised as the trapper could not turn an inattentive ear. He again spoke to the dog, encouraging him to watchfulness, by a low guarded whistle. The animal however, as if conscious of having, already, discharged his duty, obstinately refused to raise his head from the grass.

“A hint from such a friend is far better than man’s advice!” muttered the trapper, as he slowly moved towards the couple who were yet, too earnestly and abstractedly, engaged in their own discourse, to notice his approach; “and none but a conceited settler would hear it and not respect it, as he ought. Children,” he added, when nigh enough to address his companions, “we are not alone in these dreary fields; there are others stirring, and, therefore, to the shame of our kind, be it said, danger is nigh.”

“If one of the lazy sons of Skirting Ishmael is prowling out of his camp to-night,” said the young bee-hunter, with great vivacity, and in tones that might easily have been excited to a menace, “he may have an end put to his journey sooner than either he or his father is dreaming!”

“My life on it, they are all with the teams,” hurriedly answered the girl. “I saw the whole of them asleep, myself, except the two on watch; and their natures have greatly changed, if they, too, are not both dreaming of a turkey hunt, or a court-house fight, at this very moment.”

“Some beast, with a strong scent, has passed between the wind and the hound, father, and it makes him uneasy; or, perhaps, he too is dreaming. I had a pup of my own, in Kentuck, that would start upon a long chase from a deep sleep; and all upon the fancy of some dream. Go to him, and pinch his ear, that the beast may feel the life within him.”

“Not so—not so,” returned the trapper, shaking his head as one who better understood the qualities of his dog.—“Youth sleeps, ay, and dreams too; but age is awake and watchful. The pup is never false with his nose, and long experience tells me to heed his warnings.”

“Did you ever run him upon the trail of carrion?”

“Why, I must say, that the ravenous beasts have sometimes tempted me to let him loose, for they are as greedy as men, after the venison, in its season; but then I knew the reason of the dog, would tell him the object!—No—no, Hector is an animal known in the ways of man, and will never strike a false trail when a true one is to be followed!”

“Ay, ay, the secret is out! you have run the hound on the track of a wolf, and his nose has a better memory than his master!” said the bee-hunter, laughing.

“I have seen the creatur’ sleep for hours, with pack after pack, in open view. A wolf might eat out of his tray without a snarl, unless there was a scarcity; then, indeed, Hector would be apt to claim his own.”

“There are panthers down from the mountains; I saw one make a leap at a sick deer, as the sun was setting. Go; go you back to the dog, and tell him the truth, father; in a minute, I—”

He was interrupted by a long, loud, and piteous howl from the hound, which rose on the air of the evening, like the wailing of some spirit of the place, and passed off into the prairie, in cadences that rose and fell, like its own undulating surface. The trapper was impressively silent, listening intently. Even the reckless bee-hunter, was struck with the wailing wildness of the sounds. After a short pause the former whistled the dog to his side, and turning to his companions he said with the seriousness, which, in his opinion, the occasion demanded—

“They who think man enjoys all the knowledge of the creatur’s of God, will live to be disappointed, if they reach, as I have done, the age of fourscore years. I will not take upon myself to say what mischief is brewing, nor will I vouch that, even, the hound himself knows so much; but that evil is nigh, and that wisdom invites us to avoid it, I have heard from the mouth of one who never lies. I did think, the pup had become unused to the footsteps of man, and that your presence made him uneasy; but his nose has been on a long scent the whole evening, and what I mistook as a notice of your coming, has been intended for something more serious. If the advice of an old man is, then, worth hearkening to, children, you will quickly go different ways to your places of shelter and safety.”

“If I quit Ellen, at such a moment,” exclaimed the youth, “may I—”

“You’ve said enough!” the girl interrupted, by again interposing a band that might, both by its delicacy and colour, have graced a far more elevated station in life; “my time is out; and we must part, at all events—so good night, Paul—father—good night.”

“Hist!” said the youth, seizing her arm, as she was in the very act of tripping from his side—“Hist! do you hear nothing? There are

buffaloes playing their pranks, at no great distance—That sound beats the earth like a herd of the mad scampering devils!”

His two companions listened, as people in their situation would be apt to lend their faculties to discover the meaning of any doubtful noises, especially, when heard after so many and such startling warnings. The unusual sounds were unequivocally though still faintly audible. The youth and his female companion had made several hurried, and vacillating conjectures concerning their nature, when a current of the night air brought the rush of trampling footsteps, too sensibly, to their ears, to render mistake any longer possible.

“I am right!” said the bee-hunter; “a panther is driving a herd before him; or may be, there is a battle among the beasts.”

“Your ears are cheats,” returned the old man, who, from the moment his own organs had been able to catch the distant sounds, stood like a statue made to represent deep attention:—“the leaps are too long for the buffalo, and too regular for terror. Hist! now they are in a bottom where the grass is high, and the sound is deadened! Ay, there they go on the hard earth! And now they come up the swell, dead upon us; they will be here afore you can find a cover!”

“Come, Ellen,” cried the youth, seizing his companion by the hand, “let us make a trial for the encampment.”

“Too late! too late!” exclaimed the trapper, “for the creatures are in open view; and a bloody band of accursed Siouxs they are, by their thieving look, and the random fashion in which they ride!”

“Siouxs or devils, they shall find us men!” said the bee-hunter, with a mien as fierce as if he led a party of superior strength, and of a courage equal to his own.—“You have a piece, old man, and will pull a trigger in behalf of a helpless, Christian girl!”

“Down, down into the grass—down with ye both,” whispered the trapper, intimating to them to turn aside to the tall weeds, which grew, in a denser body than common, near the place where they stood. “You’ve not the time to fly, nor the numbers to fight, foolish boy. Down into the grass, if you prize the young woman, or value the gift of life!”

His remonstrance, seconded, as it was, by a prompt and energetic action, did not fail to produce the submission to his order, which the occasion seemed, indeed, imperiously to require. The moon had fallen behind a sheet of thin, fleecy, clouds, which skirted the horizon, leaving just enough of its faint and fluctuating light, to render objects visible, dimly revealing their forms and proportions. The trapper, by exercising that species of influence, over his companions, which experience and decision usually assert, in cases of emergency, had effectually succeeded in concealing them in the grass, and by the aid of the feeble rays of the luminary, he was enabled to scan the disorderly party which was riding, like so many madmen, directly upon them.

A band of beings, who resembled demons rather than men, sporting in their nightly revels across the bleak plain, was in truth approaching, at a fearful rate, and in a direction to leave little hope that some one among them, at least, would not pass over the spot where the trapper and his companions lay. At intervals, the clattering of hoofs was borne along by the night wind, quite audibly in their front, and then, again, their progress through the fog of the autumnal grass, was swift and silent; adding to the unearthly appearance of the spectacle. The trapper, who had called in his hound, and bidden him crouch at his side, now kneeled in the cover also, and kept a keen and watchful eye on the route of the band, soothing the fears of the girl, and restraining the impatience of the youth, in the same breath.

“If there’s one, there’s thirty of the miscreants!” he said, in a sort of episode to his whispered comments. “Ay, ay; they are edging towards the river—Peace, pup—peace—no, here they come this way again—the thieves don’t seem to know their own errand! If there were just six of us, lad, what a beautiful ambushment we might make upon them, from this very spot—it won’t do, it won’t do, boy; keep yourself closer, or your head will be seen—besides, I’m not altogether strong in the opinion it would be lawful, as they have done us no harm.—There they bend again to the river—no; here they come up the swell—now is the moment to be as still, as if the breath had done its duty and departed the body.”

The old man sunk into the grass while he was speaking, as if the final separation to which he alluded, had, in his own case, actually occurred, and, at the next instant, a band of wild horsemen whirled by them, with the noiseless rapidity in which it might be imagined a troop of spectres would pass. The dark and fleeting forms were already vanished, when the trapper ventured again to raise his head to a level with the tops of the bending herbage, motioning at the same time, to his companions to maintain their positions and their silence.

“They are going down the swell, towards the encampment,” he continued, in his former guarded tones; “no, they halt in the bottom, and are clustering together like deer, in council. By the Lord, they are turning again, and we are not yet done with the reptiles!”

Once more he sought his friendly cover, and at the next instant the dark troop were to be seen riding, in a disorderly manner, on the very summit of the little elevation on which the trapper and his companions lay. It was now soon apparent that they had returned to avail themselves of the height of the ground, in order to examine the dim horizon.

Some dismounted, while others rode to and fro, like men engaged in a local enquiry of much interest. Happily, for the hidden party, the grass in which they were concealed, not only served to screen them from the eyes of the savages, but opposed an obstacle to prevent their horses, which were no less rude and untrained than their riders, from trampling on them, in their irregular and wild paces.

At length an athletic and dark looking Indian, who, by his air of authority, would seem to be the leader, summoned his chiefs about him, to a consultation, which was held mounted. This body was collected on the very margin of that mass of herbage in which the trapper and his companions were hid. As the young man looked up and saw the fierce aspect of the group, which was increasing at each instant by the accession of some countenance and figure, apparently more forbidding than any which had preceded it, he drew his rifle, by a very natural impulse, from beneath him, and commenced putting it in a state for service. The female, at his side, buried her face in the grass, by a feeling that was, possibly, quite as natural to her sex and habits, leaving him to follow the impulses of his hot blood; but his aged and more prudent adviser, whispered, sternly, in his ear—

“The tick of the lock is as well known to the knaves, as the blast of a trumpet to a soldier! lay down the piece—lay down the piece—should the moon touch the barrel, it could not fail to be seen by the devils, whose eyes are keener than the blackest snake’s! The smallest motion, now, would be sure to bring an arrow among us.”

The bee-hunter so far obeyed as to continue immovable and silent. But there was still sufficient light to convince his companion, by

the contracted brow and threatening eye of the young man, that a discovery would not bestow a bloodless victory on the savages. Finding his advice disregarded, the trapper took his measures accordingly, and awaited the result with a resignation and calmness that were characteristic of the individual.

In the mean time, the Siouxes (for the sagacity of the old man was not deceived in the character of his dangerous neighbours) had terminated their council, and were again dispersed along the ridge of land as if they sought some hidden object.

“The imps have heard the hound!” whispered the trapper, “and their ears are too true to be cheated in the distance. Keep close, lad, keep close; down with your head to the very earth, like a dog that sleeps.”

“Let us rather take to our feet, and trust to manhood,” returned his impatient companion.

He would have proceeded; but feeling a hand laid rudely on his shoulder, he turned his eyes upward, and beheld the dark and savage countenance of an Indian gleaming full upon him. Notwithstanding the surprise and the disadvantage of his attitude, the youth was not disposed to become a captive so easily. Quicker than the flash of his own gun he sprang upon his feet, and was throttling his opponent with a power that would soon have terminated the contest, when he felt the arms of the trapper thrown round his body, confining his exertions by a strength very little inferior to his own. Before he had time to reproach his comrade for this apparent treachery, a dozen Siouxes were around them, and the whole party were compelled to yield themselves as prisoners.

## CHAPTER IV

—With much more dismay,  
I view the fight, than those that make the fray.  
—Merchant of Venice.

The unfortunate bee-hunter and his companions had become the captives of a people, who might, without exaggeration, be called the Ishmaelites of the American deserts. From time immemorial, the hands of the Siouxes had been turned against their neighbours of the prairies, and even at this day, when the influence and authority of a civilised government are beginning to be felt around them, they are considered a treacherous and dangerous race. At the period of our tale, the case was far worse; few white men trusting themselves in the remote and unprotected regions where so false a tribe was known to dwell.

Notwithstanding the peaceable submission of the trapper, he was quite aware of the character of the band into whose hands he had fallen. It would have been difficult, however, for the nicest judge to have determined whether fear, policy, or resignation formed the secret motive of the old man, in permitting himself to be plundered as he did, without a murmur. So far from opposing any remonstrance to the rude and violent manner in which his conquerors performed the customary office, he even anticipated their cupidity, by tendering to the chiefs such articles as he thought might prove the most acceptable. On the other hand Paul Hover, who had been literally a conquered man, manifested the strongest repugnance to submit to the violent liberties that were taken with his person and property. He even gave several exceedingly unequivocal demonstrations of his displeasure during the summary process, and would, more than once, have broken out in open and desperate resistance, but for the admonitions and entreaties of the trembling girl, who clung to his side, in a manner so dependent, as to show the youth, that her hopes were now placed, no less on his discretion, than on his disposition to serve her.

The Indians had, however, no sooner deprived the captives of their arms and ammunition, and stripped them of a few articles of dress of little use, and perhaps of less value, than they appeared disposed to grant them a respite. Business of greater moment pressed on their hands, and required their attention. Another consultation of the chiefs was convened, and it was apparent, by the earnest and vehement manner of the few who spoke, that the warriors conceived their success as yet to be far from complete.

“It will be well,” whispered the trapper, who knew enough of the language he heard to comprehend perfectly the subject of the discussion, “if the travellers who lie near the willow brake are not awoke out of their sleep by a visit from these miscreants. They are too cunning to believe that a woman of the ‘pale-faces’ is to be found so far from the settlements, without having a white man’s inventions and comforts at hand.”

“If they will carry the tribe of wandering Ishmael to the Rocky Mountains,” said the young bee-hunter, laughing in his vexation with a sort of bitter merriment, “I may forgive the rascals.”

“Paul! Paul!” exclaimed his companion in a tone of reproach, “you forget all! Think of the dreadful consequences!”

“Ay, it was thinking of what you call consequences, Ellen, that prevented me from putting the matter, at once, to yonder red-devil, and making it a real knock-down and drag-out! Old trapper, the sin of this cowardly business lies on your shoulders! But it is no more than your daily calling, I reckon, to take men, as well as beasts, in snares.”

“I implore you, Paul, to be calm—to be patient.”

“Well, since it is your wish, Ellen,” returned the youth, endeavouring to swallow his spleen, “I will make the trial; though, as you ought to know, it is part of the religion of a Kentuckian to fret himself a little at a mischance.”

“I fear your friends in the other bottom will not escape the eyes of the imps!” continued the trapper, as coolly as though he had not heard a syllable of the intervening discourse. “They scent plunder; and it would be as hard to drive a hound from his game, as to throw the varmints from its trail.”

“Is there nothing to be done?” asked Ellen, in an imploring manner, which proved the sincerity of her concern.

“It would be an easy matter to call out, in so loud a voice as to make old Ishmael dream that the wolves were among his flock,” Paul replied; “I can make myself heard a mile in these open fields, and his camp is but a short quarter from us.”

“And get knocked on the head for your pains,” returned the trapper. “No, no; cunning must match cunning, or the hounds will murder the whole family.”

“Murder! no—no murder. Ishmael loves travel so well, there would be no harm in his having a look at the other sea, but the old fellow is in a bad condition to take the long journey! I would try a lock myself before he should be quite murdered.”

“His party is strong in number, and well armed; do you think it will fight?”

“Look here, old trapper: few men love Ishmael Bush and his seven sledge-hammer sons less than one Paul Hover; but I scorn to slander even a Tennessee shotgun. There is as much of the true stand-up courage among them, as there is in any family that was ever raised in Kentuck, itself. They are a long-sided and a double-jointed breed; and let me tell you, that he who takes the measure of one of them on the ground, must be a workman at a hug.”

“Hist! The savages have done their talk, and are about to set their accursed devices in motion. Let us be patient; something may yet offer in favour of your friends.”

“Friends! call none of the race a friend of mine, trapper, if you have the smallest regard for my affection! What I say in their favour is less from love than honesty.”

“I did not know but the young woman was of the kin,” returned the other, a little drily—“but no offence should be taken, where none

was intended."

The mouth of Paul was again stopped by the hand of Ellen, who took on herself to reply, in her conciliating tones: "we should be all of a family, when it is in our power to serve each other. We depend entirely on your experience, honest old man, to discover the means to apprise our friends of their danger."

"There will be a real time of it," muttered the bee-hunter, laughing, "if the boys get at work, in good earnest, with these red skins!"

He was interrupted by a general movement which took place among the band. The Indians dismounted to a man, giving their horses in charge to three or four of the party, who were also intrusted with the safe keeping of the prisoners. They then formed themselves in a circle around a warrior, who appeared to possess the chief authority; and at a given signal the whole array moved slowly and cautiously from the centre in straight and consequently in diverging lines. Most of their dark forms were soon blended with the brown covering of the prairie; though the captives, who watched the slightest movement of their enemies with vigilant eyes, were now and then enabled to discern a human figure, drawn against the horizon, as some one, more eager than the rest, rose to his greatest height in order to extend the limits of his view. But it was not long before even these fugitive glimpses of the moving, and constantly increasing circle, were lost, and uncertainty and conjecture were added to apprehension. In this manner passed many anxious and weary minutes, during the close of which the listeners expected at each moment to hear the whoop of the assailants and the shrieks of the assailed, rising together on the stillness of the night. But it would seem, that the search which was so evidently making, was without a sufficient object; for at the expiration of half an hour the different individuals of the band began to return singly, gloomy and sullen, like men who were disappointed.

"Our time is at hand," observed the trapper, who noted the smallest incident, or the slightest indication of hostility among the savages: "we are now to be questioned; and if I know any thing of the policy of our case, I should say it would be wise to choose one among us to hold the discourse, in order that our testimony may agree. And furthermore, if an opinion from one as old and as worthless as a hunter of fourscore, is to be regarded, I would just venture to say, that man should be the one most skilled in the nature of an Indian, and that he should also know something of their language.—Are you acquainted with the tongue of the Siouxes, friend?"

"Swarm your own hive," returned the discontented bee-hunter. "You are good at buzzing, old trapper, if you are good at nothing else."

"'Tis the gift of youth to be rash and heady," the trapper calmly retorted. "The day has been, boy, when my blood was like your own, too swift and too hot to run quietly in my veins. But what will it profit to talk of silly risks and foolish acts at this time of life! A grey head should cover a brain of reason, and not the tongue of a boaster."

"True, true," whispered Ellen; "and we have other things to attend to now! Here comes the Indian to put his questions."

The girl, whose apprehensions had quickened her senses, was not deceived. She was yet speaking when a tall, half naked savage, approached the spot where they stood, and after examining the whole party as closely as the dim light permitted, for more than a minute in perfect stillness, he gave the usual salutation in the harsh and guttural tones of his own language. The trapper replied as well as he could, which it seems was sufficiently well to be understood. In order to escape the imputation of pedantry we shall render the substance, and, so far as it is possible, the form of the dialogue that succeeded, into the English tongue.

"Have the pale-faces eaten their own buffaloes, and taken the skins from all their own beavers," continued the savage, allowing the usual moment of decorum to elapse, after the words of greeting, before he again spoke, "that they come to count how many are left among the Pawnees?"

"Some of us are here to buy, and some to sell," returned the trapper; "but none will follow, if they hear it is not safe to come nigh the lodge of a Sioux."

"The Siouxes are thieves, and they live among the snow; why do we talk of a people who are so far, when we are in the country of the Pawnees?"

"If the Pawnees are the owners of this land, then white and red are here by equal right."

"Have not the pale-faces stolen enough from the red men, that you come so far to carry a lie? I have said that this is a hunting-ground of my tribe."

"My right to be here is equal to your own," the trapper rejoined, with undisturbed coolness; "I do not speak as I might—it is better to be silent. The Pawnees and the white men are brothers, but a Sioux dare not show his face in the village of the Loups."

"The Dahcotahs are men!" exclaimed the savage, fiercely; forgetting in his anger to maintain the character he had assumed, and using the appellation of which his nation was most proud; "the Dahcotahs have no fear! Speak; what brings you so far from the villages of the pale-faces?"

"I have seen the sun rise and set on many councils, and have heard the words of wise men. Let your chiefs come, and my mouth shall not be shut."

"I am a great chief!" said the savage, affecting an air of offended dignity. "Do you take me for an Assiniboine? Weucha is a warrior often named, and much believed!"

"Am I a fool not to know a burnt-wood Teton?" demanded the trapper, with a steadiness that did great credit to his nerves. "Go; it is dark, and you do not see that my head is grey!"

The Indian now appeared convinced that he had adopted too shallow an artifice to deceive one so practised as the man he addressed, and he was deliberating what fiction he should next invent, in order to obtain his real object, when a slight commotion among the band put an end at once to all his schemes. Casting his eyes behind him, as if fearful of a speedy interruption, he said, in tones much less pretending than those he had first resorted to—

"Give Weucha the milk of the Long-knives, and he will sing your name in the ears of the great men of his tribe."

"Go," repeated the trapper, motioning him away, with strong disgust. "Your young men are speaking of Mahtoree. My words are for the ears of a chief."

The savage cast a look at the other, which, notwithstanding the dim light, was sufficiently indicative of implacable hostility. He then stole away among his fellows, anxious to conceal the counterfeit he had attempted to practise, no less than the treachery he had contemplated against a fair division of the spoils, from the man named by the trapper, whom he now also knew to be approaching, by the manner in which his name passed from one to another, in the band. He had hardly disappeared before a warrior of powerful frame advanced out of the dark circle, and placed himself before the captives, with that high and proud bearing for which a distinguished Indian chief is ever so remarkable. He was followed by all the party, who arranged themselves around his person, in a deep and respectful silence.

"The earth is very large," the chief commenced, after a pause of that true dignity which his counterfeit had so miserably affected; "why can the children of my great white father never find room on it?"

"Some among them have heard that their friends in the prairies are in want of many things," returned the trapper; "and they have come to see if it be true. Some want, in their turns, what the red men are willing to sell, and they come to make their friends rich, with powder and blankets."

"Do traders cross the big river with empty hands?"

"Our hands are empty because your young men thought we were tired, and they have lightened us of our load. They were mistaken; I am old, but I am still strong."

"It cannot be. Your load has fallen in the prairies. Show my young men the place, that they may pick it up before the Pawnees find it."

"The path to the spot is crooked, and it is night. The hour is come for sleep," said the trapper, with perfect composure. "Bid your warriors go over yonder hill; there is water and there is wood; let them light their fires and sleep with warm feet. When the sun comes again I will speak to you."

A low murmur, but one that was clearly indicative of dissatisfaction, passed among the attentive listeners, and served to inform the old man that he had not been sufficiently wary in proposing a measure that he intended should notify the travellers in the brake of the presence of their dangerous neighbours. Mahtoree, however, without betraying, in the slightest degree, the excitement which was so strongly exhibited by his companions, continued the discourse in the same lofty manner as before.

"I know that my friend is rich," he said; "that he has many warriors not far off, and that horses are plentier with him, than dogs among the red-skins."

"You see my warriors, and my horses."

"What! has the woman the feet of a Dahcotah, that she can walk for thirty nights in the prairies, and not fall! I know the red men of the woods make long marches on foot, but we, who live where the eye cannot see from one lodge to another, love our horses."

The trapper now hesitated, in his turn. He was perfectly aware that deception, if detected, might prove dangerous; and, for one of his pursuits and character, he was strongly troubled with an unaccommodating regard for the truth. But, recollecting that he controlled the fate of others as well as of himself, he determined to let things take their course, and to permit the Dahcotah chief to deceive himself if he would.

"The women of the Siouzes and of the white men are not of the same wigwam," he answered evasively. "Would a Teton warrior make his wife greater than himself? I know he would not; and yet my ears have heard that there are lands where the councils are held by squaws."

Another slight movement in the dark circle apprised the trapper that his declaration was not received without surprise, if entirely without distrust. The chief alone seemed unmoved; nor was he disposed to relax from the loftiness and high dignity of his air.

"My white fathers who live on the great lakes have declared," he said, "that their brothers towards the rising sun are not men; and now I know they did not lie! Go—what is a nation whose chief is a squaw! Are you the dog and not the husband of this woman?"

"I am neither. Never did I see her face before this day. She came into the prairies because they had told her a great and generous nation called the Dahcotahs lived there, and she wished to look on men. The women of the pale-faces, like the women of the Siouzes, open their eyes to see things that are new; but she is poor, like myself, and she will want corn and buffaloes, if you take away the little that she and her friend still have."

"My ears listen to many wicked lies!" exclaimed the Teton warrior, in a voice so stern that it startled even his red auditors. "Am I a woman? Has not a Dahcotah eyes? Tell me, white hunter; who are the men of your colour, that sleep near the fallen trees?"

As he spoke, the indignant chief pointed in the direction of Ishmael's encampment, leaving the trapper no reason to doubt, that the superior industry and sagacity of this man had effected a discovery, which had eluded the search of the rest of his party. Notwithstanding his regret at an event that might prove fatal to the sleepers, and some little vexation at having been so completely outwitted, in the dialogue just related, the old man continued to maintain his air of inflexible composure.

"It may be true," he answered, "that white men are sleeping in the prairie. If my brother says it, it is true; but what men thus trust to the generosity of the Teton, I cannot tell. If there be strangers asleep, send your young men to wake them up, and let them say why they are here; every pale-face has a tongue." The chief shook his head with a wild and fierce smile, answering abruptly, as he turned away to put an end to the conference—

"The Dahcotahs are a wise race, and Mahtoree is their chief! He will not call to the strangers, that they may rise and speak to him with their carabines. He will whisper softly in their ears. When this is done, let the men of their own colour come and awake them!"

As he uttered these words, and turned on his heel, a low and approving laugh passed around the dark circle, which instantly broke its

order and followed him to a little distance from the stand of the captives, where those who might presume to mingle opinions with so great a warrior again gathered about him in consultation. Weucha profited by the occasion to renew his importunities; but the trapper, who had discovered how great a counterfeit he was, shook him off in displeasure. An end was, however, more effectually put to the annoyance of this malignant savage, by a mandate for the whole party, including men and beasts, to change their positions. The movement was made in dead silence, and with an order that would have done credit to more enlightened beings. A halt, however, was soon made; and when the captives had time to look about them, they found they were in view of the low, dark outline of the copse, near which lay the slumbering party of Ishmael.

Here another short but grave and deliberative consultation was held.

The beasts, which seemed trained to such covert and silent attacks, were once more placed under the care of keepers, who, as before, were charged with the duty of watching the prisoners. The mind of the trapper was in no degree relieved from the uneasiness which was, at each instant, getting a stronger possession of him, when he found Weucha was placed nearest to his own person, and, as it appeared by the air of triumph and authority he assumed, at the head of the guard also. The savage, however, who doubtless had his secret instructions, was content, for the present, with making a significant gesture with his tomahawk, which menaced death to Ellen. After admonishing in this expressive manner his male captives of the fate that would instantly attend their female companion, on the slightest alarm proceeding from any of the party, he was content to maintain a rigid silence. This unexpected forbearance, on the part of Weucha, enabled the trapper and his two associates to give their undivided attention to the little that might be seen of the interesting movements which were passing in their front.

Mahtoree took the entire disposition of the arrangements on himself. He pointed out the precise situation he wished each individual to occupy, like one intimately acquainted with the qualifications of his respective followers, and he was obeyed with the deference and promptitude with which an Indian warrior is wont to submit to the instructions of his chief, in moments of trial. Some he despatched to the right, and others to the left. Each man departed with the noiseless and quick step peculiar to the race, until all had assumed their allotted stations, with the exception of two chosen warriors, who remained nigh the person of their leader. When the rest had disappeared, Mahtoree turned to these select companions, and intimated by a sign that the critical moment had arrived, when the enterprise he contemplated was to be put in execution.

Each man laid aside the light fowling-piece, which, under the name of a carabine, he carried in virtue of his rank; and divesting himself of every article of exterior or heavy clothing, he stood resembling a dark and fierce looking statue, in the attitude, and nearly in the garb, of nature. Mahtoree assured himself of the right position of his tomahawk, felt that his knife was secure in its sheath of skin, tightened his girdle of wampum and saw that the lacing of his fringed and ornamental leggings was secure, and likely to offer no impediment to his exertions. Thus prepared at all points, and ready for his desperate undertaking, the Teton gave the signal to proceed.

The three advanced in a line with the encampment of the travellers, until, in the dim light by which they were seen, their dusky forms were nearly lost to the eyes of the prisoners. Here they paused, looking around them like men who deliberate and ponder long on the consequences before they take a desperate leap. Then sinking together, they became lost in the grass of the prairie.

It is not difficult to imagine the distress and anxiety of the different spectators of these threatening movements. Whatever might be the reasons of Ellen for entertaining no strong attachment to the family in which she has first been seen by the reader, the feelings of her sex, and, perhaps, some lingering seeds of kindness, predominated. More than once she felt tempted to brave the awful and instant danger that awaited such an offence, and to raise her feeble, and, in truth, impotent voice in warning. So strong, indeed, and so very natural was the inclination, that she would most probably have put it in execution, but for the often repeated though whispered remonstrances of Paul Hover. In the breast of the young bee-hunter himself, there was a singular union of emotions. His first and chiefest solicitude was certainly in behalf of his gentle and dependent companion; but the sense of her danger was mingled, in the breast of the reckless woodsman, with a consciousness of a high and wild, and by no means an unpleasant, excitement. Though united to the emigrants by ties still less binding than those of Ellen, he longed to hear the crack of their rifles, and, had occasion offered, he would gladly have been among the first to rush to their rescue. There were, in truth, moments when he felt in his turn an impulse, that was nearly resistless, to spring forward and awake the unconscious sleepers; but a glance at Ellen would serve to recall his tottering prudence, and to admonish him of the consequences. The trapper alone remained calm and observant, as if nothing that involved his personal comfort or safety had occurred. His ever-moving, vigilant eyes, watched the smallest change, with the composure of one too long inured to scenes of danger to be easily moved, and with an expression of cool determination which denoted the intention he actually harboured, of profiting by the smallest oversight on the part of the captors.

In the mean time the Teton warriors had not been idle. Profiting by the high fog which grew in the bottoms, they had wormed their way through the matted grass, like so many treacherous serpents stealing on their prey, until the point was gained, where an extraordinary caution became necessary to their further advance. Mahtoree, alone, had occasionally elevated his dark, grim countenance above the herbage, straining his eye-balls to penetrate the gloom which skirted the border of the brake. In these momentary glances he gained sufficient knowledge, added to that he had obtained in his former search, to be the perfect master of the position of his intended victims, though he was still profoundly ignorant of their numbers, and of their means of defence.

His efforts to possess himself of the requisite knowledge concerning these two latter and essential points were, however, completely baffled by the stillness of the camp, which lay in a quiet as deep as if it were literally a place of the dead. Too wary and distrustful to rely, in circumstances of so much doubt, on the discretion of any less firm and crafty than himself, the Dahcotah bade his companions remain where they lay, and pursued the adventure alone.

The progress of Mahtoree was now slow, and to one less accustomed to such a species of exercise, it would have proved painfully laborious. But the advance of the wily snake itself is not more certain or noiseless than was his approach. He drew his form, foot by foot, through the bending grass, pausing at each movement to catch the smallest sound that might betray any knowledge, on the part of the travellers, of his proximity. He succeeded, at length, in dragging himself out of the sickly light of the moon, into the shadows of the brake, where not only his own dark person was much less liable to be seen, but where the surrounding objects became more distinctly

visible to his keen and active glances.

Here the Teton paused long and warily to make his observations, before he ventured further. His position enabled him to bring the whole encampment, with its tent, wagons, and lodges, into a dark but clearly marked profile; furnishing a clue by which the practised warrior was led to a tolerably accurate estimate of the force he was about to encounter. Still an unnatural silence pervaded the spot, as if men suppressed even the quiet breathings of sleep, in order to render the appearance of their confidence more evident. The chief bent his head to the earth, and listened intently. He was about to raise it again, in disappointment, when the long drawn and trembling respiration of one who slumbered imperfectly met his ear. The Indian was too well skilled in all the means of deception to become himself the victim of any common artifice. He knew the sound to be natural, by its peculiar quivering, and he hesitated no longer.

A man of nerves less tried than those of the fierce and conquering Mahtoree would have been keenly sensible of all the hazard he incurred. The reputation of those hardy and powerful white adventurers, who so often penetrated the wilds inhabited by his people, was well known to him; but while he drew nigher, with the respect and caution that a brave enemy never fails to inspire, it was with the vindictive animosity of a red man, jealous and resentful of the inroads of the stranger.

Turning from the line of his former route, the Teton dragged himself directly towards the margin of the thicket. When this material object was effected in safety, he arose to his seat, and took a better survey of his situation. A single moment served to apprise him of the place where the unsuspecting traveller lay. The reader will readily anticipate that the savage had succeeded in gaining a dangerous proximity to one of those slothful sons of Ishmael, who were deputed to watch over the isolated encampment of the travellers.

When certain that he was undiscovered, the Dahcotah raised his person again, and bending forward, he moved his dark visage above the face of the sleeper, in that sort of wanton and subtle manner with which the reptile is seen to play about its victim before it strikes. Satisfied at length, not only of the condition but of the character of the stranger, Mahtoree was in the act of withdrawing his head, when a slight movement of the sleeper announced the symptoms of reviving consciousness. The savage seized the knife which hung at his girdle, and in an instant it was poised above the breast of the young emigrant. Then changing his purpose, with an action as rapid as his own flashing thoughts, he sunk back behind the trunk of the fallen tree against which the other reclined, and lay in its shadow, as dark, as motionless, and apparently as insensible as the wood itself.

The slothful sentinel opened his heavy eyes, and gazing upward for a moment at the hazy heavens, he made an extraordinary exertion, and raised his powerful frame from the support of the log. Then he looked about him, with an air of something like watchfulness, suffering his dull glances to run over the misty objects of the encampment until they finally settled on the distant and dim field of the open prairie. Meeting with nothing more attractive than the same faint outlines of swell and interval, which every where rose before his drowsy eyes, he changed his position so as completely to turn his back on his dangerous neighbour, and suffered his person to sink sluggishly down into its former recumbent attitude. A long, and, on the part of the Teton, an anxious and painful silence succeeded, before the deep breathing of the traveller again announced that he was indulging in his slumbers. The savage was, however, far too jealous of a counterfeit to trust to the first appearance of sleep. But the fatigues of a day of unusual toil lay too heavy on the sentinel to leave the other long in doubt. Still the motion with which Mahtoree again raised himself to his knees was so noiseless and guarded, that even a vigilant observer might have hesitated to believe he stirred. The change was, however, at length effected, and the Dahcotah chief then bent again over his enemy, without having produced a noise louder than that of the cotton-wood leaf which fluttered at his side in the currents of the passing air.

Mahtoree now felt himself master of the sleeper's fate. At the same time that he scanned the vast proportions and athletic limbs of the youth, in that sort of admiration which physical excellence seldom fails to excite in the breast of a savage, he coolly prepared to extinguish the principle of vitality which could alone render them formidable. After making himself sure of the seat of life, by gently removing the folds of the intervening cloth, he raised his keen weapon, and was about to unite his strength and skill in the impending blow, when the young man threw his brawny arm carelessly backward, exhibiting in the action the vast volume of its muscles.

The sagacious and wary Teton paused. It struck his acute faculties that sleep was less dangerous to him, at that moment, than even death itself might prove. The smallest noise, the agony of struggling, with which such a frame would probably relinquish its hold of life, suggested themselves to his rapid thoughts, and were all present to his experienced senses. He looked back into the encampment, turned his head into the thicket, and glanced his glowing eyes abroad into the wild and silent prairies. Bending once more over the respite victim, he assured himself that he was sleeping heavily, and then abandoned his immediate purpose in obedience alone to the suggestions of a more crafty policy.

The retreat of Mahtoree was as still and guarded as had been his approach. He now took the direction of the encampment, stealing along the margin of the brake, as a cover into which he might easily plunge at the smallest alarm. The drapery of the solitary hut attracted his notice in passing. After examining the whole of its exterior, and listening with painful intensity, in order to gather counsel from his ears, the savage ventured to raise the cloth at the bottom, and to thrust his dark visage beneath. It might have been a minute before the Teton chief drew back, and seated himself with the whole of his form without the linen tenement. Here he sat, seemingly brooding over his discovery, for many moments, in rigid inaction. Then he resumed his crouching attitude, and once more projected his visage beyond the covering of the tent. His second visit to the interior was longer, and, if possible, more ominous than the first. But it had, like every thing else, its termination, and the savage again withdrew his glaring eyes from the secrets of the place.

Mahtoree had drawn his person many yards from the spot, in his slow progress towards the cluster of objects which pointed out the centre of the position, before he again stopped. He made another pause, and looked back at the solitary little dwelling he had left, as if doubtful whether he should not return. But the chevaux-de-frise of branches now lay within reach of his arm, and the very appearance of precaution it presented, as it announced the value of the effects it encircled, tempted his cupidity, and induced him to proceed.

The passage of the savage, through the tender and brittle limbs of the cotton-wood, could be likened only to the sinuous and noiseless winding of the reptiles which he imitated. When he had effected his object, and had taken an instant to become acquainted with the nature of the localities within the enclosure, the Teton used the precaution to open a way through which he might make a swift retreat. Then raising himself on his feet, he stalked through the encampment, like the master of evil, seeking whom and what he should



first devote to his fell purposes. He had already ascertained the contents of the lodge in which were collected the woman and her young children, and had passed several gigantic frames, stretched on different piles of brush, which happily for him lay in unconscious helplessness, when he reached the spot occupied by Ishmael in person. It could not escape the sagacity of one like Mahtoree, that he had now within his power the principal man among the travellers. He stood long hovering above the recumbent and Herculean form of the emigrant, keenly debating in his own mind the chances of his enterprise, and the most effectual means of reaping its richest harvest.

He sheathed the knife, which, under the hasty and burning impulse of his thoughts, he had been tempted to draw, and was passing on, when Ishmael turned in his lair, and demanded roughly who was moving before his half-opened eyes. Nothing short of the readiness and cunning of a savage could have evaded the crisis. Imitating the gruff tones and nearly unintelligible sounds he heard, Mahtoree threw his body heavily on the earth, and appeared to dispose himself to sleep. Though the whole movement was seen by Ishmael, in a sort of stupid observation, the artifice was too bold and too admirably executed to fail. The drowsy father closed his eyes, and slept heavily, with this treacherous inmate in the very bosom of his family.

It was necessary for the Teton to maintain the position he had taken, for many long and weary minutes, in order to make sure that he was no longer watched. Though his body lay so motionless, his active mind was not idle. He profited by the delay to mature a plan which he intended should put the whole encampment, including both its effects and their proprietors, entirely at his mercy. The instant he could do so with safety, the indefatigable savage was again in motion. He took his way towards the slight pen which contained the domestic animals, worming himself along the ground in his former subtle and guarded manner.

The first animal he encountered among the beasts occasioned a long and hazardous delay. The weary creature, perhaps conscious, through its secret instinct, that in the endless wastes of the prairies its surest protector was to be found in man, was so exceedingly docile as quietly to submit to the close examination it was doomed to undergo. The hand of the wandering Teton passed over the downy coat, the meek countenance, and the slender limbs of the gentle creature, with untiring curiosity; but he finally abandoned the prize, as useless in his predatory expeditions, and offering too little temptation to the appetite. As soon, however, as he found himself among the beasts of burden, his gratification was extreme, and it was with difficulty that he restrained the customary ejaculations of pleasure that were more than once on the point of bursting from his lips. Here he lost sight of the hazards by which he had gained access to his dangerous position; and the watchfulness of the wary and long practised warrior was momentarily forgotten in the exultation of the savage.

## CHAPTER V

Why, worthy father, what have we to lose?  
—The law  
Protects us not. Then why should we be tender  
To let an arrogant piece of flesh threat us!  
Play judge and executioner.

—Cymbeline.

While the Teton thus enacted his subtle and characteristic part, not a sound broke the stillness of the surrounding prairie. The whole band lay at their several posts, waiting, with the well-known patience of the natives, for the signal which was to summon them to action. To the eyes of the anxious spectators who occupied the little eminence, already described as the position of the captives, the scene presented the broad, solemn view of a waste, dimly lighted by the glimmering rays of a clouded moon. The place of the encampment was marked by a gloom deeper than that which faintly shadowed out the courses of the bottoms, and here and there a brighter streak tinged the rolling summits of the ridges. As for the rest, it was the deep, imposing quiet of a desert.

But to those who so well knew how much was brooding beneath this mantle of stillness and night, it was a scene of high and wild excitement. Their anxiety gradually increased, as minute after minute passed away, and not the smallest sound of life arose out of the calm and darkness which enveloped the brake. The breathing of Paul grew louder and deeper, and more than once Ellen trembled at she knew not what, as she felt the quivering of his active frame, while she leaned dependently on his arm for support.

The shallow honesty, as well as the besetting infirmity of Weucha, have already been exhibited. The reader, therefore, will not be surprised to learn that he was the first to forget the regulations he had himself imposed. It was at the precise moment when we left Mahtoree yielding to his nearly ungovernable delight, as he surveyed the number and quality of Ishmael's beasts of burden, that the man he had selected to watch his captives chose to indulge in the malignant pleasure of tormenting those it was his duty to protect. Bending his head nigh the ear of the trapper, the savage rather muttered than whispered—

“If the Tetons lose their great chief by the hands of the Long-knives[\*], old shall die as well as young!”

[\*] The whites are so called by the Indians, from their swords.

“Life is the gift of the Wahcondah,” was the unmoved reply. “The burnt-wood warrior must submit to his laws, as well as his other children. Men only die when he chooses; and no Dahcotah can change the hour.”

“Look!” returned the savage, thrusting the blade of his knife before the face of his captive. “Weucha is the Wahcondah of a dog.”

The old man raised his eyes to the fierce visage of his keeper, and, for a moment, a gleam of honest and powerful disgust shot from their deep cells; but it instantly passed away, leaving in its place an expression of commiseration, if not of sorrow.

“Why should one made in the real image of God suffer his nature to be provoked by a mere effigy of reason?” he said in English, and in tones much louder than those in which Weucha had chosen to pitch the conversation. The latter profited by the unintentional offence of his captive, and, seizing him by the thin, grey locks, that fell from beneath his cap, was on the point of passing the blade of his knife in malignant triumph around their throats, when a long, shrill yell rent the air, and was instantly echoed from the surrounding waste, as if a thousand demons opened their throats in common at the summons. Weucha relinquished his grasp, and uttered a cry of exultation.

“Now!” shouted Paul, unable to control his impatience any longer, “now, old Ishmael, is the time to show the native blood of Kentucky! Fire low, boys—level into the swales, for the red skins are settling to the very earth!”

His voice was, however, lost, or rather unheeded, in the midst of the shrieks, shouts, and yells that were, by this time, bursting from fifty mouths on every side of him. The guards still maintained their posts at the side of the captives, but it was with that sort of difficulty with which steeds are restrained at the starting-post, when expecting the signal to commence the trial of speed. They tossed their arms wildly in the air, leaping up and down more like exulting children than sober men, and continued to utter the most frantic cries.

In the midst of this tumultuous disorder a rushing sound was heard, similar to that which might be expected to precede the passage of a flight of buffaloes, and then came the flocks and cattle of Ishmael in one confused and frightened drove.

“They have robbed the squatter of his beasts!” said the attentive trapper. “The reptiles have left him as hoofless as a beaver!” He was yet speaking, when the whole body of the terrified animals rose the little acclivity, and swept by the place where he stood, followed by a band of dusky and demon-like looking figures, who pressed madly on their rear.

The impulse was communicated to the Teton horses, long accustomed to sympathise in the untutored passions of their owners, and it was with difficulty that the keepers were enabled to restrain their impatience. At this moment, when all eyes were directed to the passing whirlwind of men and beasts, the trapper caught the knife from the hands of his inattentive keeper, with a power that his age would have seemed to contradict, and, at a single blow, severed the thong of hide which connected the whole of the drove. The wild animals snorted with joy and terror, and tearing the earth with their heels, they dashed away into the broad prairies, in a dozen different directions.

Weucha turned upon his assailant with the ferocity and agility of a tiger. He felt for the weapon of which he had been so suddenly deprived, fumbled with impotent haste for the handle of his tomahawk, and at the same moment glanced his eyes after the flying cattle, with the longings of a Western Indian. The struggle between thirst for vengeance and cupidity was severe but short. The latter quickly predominated in the bosom of one whose passions were proverbially grovelling; and scarcely a moment intervened between the flight of the animals and the swift pursuit of the guards. The trapper had continued calmly facing his foe, during the instant of suspense that succeeded his hardy act; and now that Weucha was seen following his companions, he pointed after the dark train, saying, with his

deep and nearly inaudible laugh—

"Red-natur' is red-natur', let it show itself on a prairie, or in a forest! A knock on the head would be the smallest reward to him who should take such a liberty with a Christian sentinel; but there goes the Teton after his horses as if he thought two legs as good as four in such a race! And yet the imps will have every hoof of them afore the day sets in, because it's reason ag'in instinct. Poor reason, I allow; but still there is a great deal of the man in an Indian. Ah's me! your Delawares were the redskins of which America might boast; but few and scattered is that mighty people, now! Well! the traveller may just make his pitch where he is; he has plenty of water, though natur' has cheated him of the pleasure of stripping the 'arth of its lawful trees. He has seen the last of his four-footed creatures, or I am but little skilled in Sioux cunning."

"Had we not better join the party of Ishmael?" said the bee-hunter. "There will be a regular fight about this matter, or the old fellow has suddenly grown chicken-hearted."

"No—no—no," hastily exclaimed Ellen.

She was stopped by the trapper, who laid his hand gently on her mouth, as he answered—

"Hist—hist!—the sound of voices might bring us into danger. Is your friend," he added, turning to Paul, "a man of spirit enough?"

"Don't call the squatter a friend of mine!" interrupted the youth. "I never yet harboured with one who could not show hand and zeal for the land which fed him."

"Well—well. Let it then be acquaintance. Is he a man to maintain his own, stoutly by dint of powder and lead?"

"His own! ay, and that which is not his own, too! Can you tell me, old trapper, who held the rifle that did the deed for the sheriff's deputy, that thought to rout the unlawful settlers who had gathered nigh the Buffalo lick in old Kentucky? I had lined a beautiful swarm that very day into the hollow of a dead beech, and there lay the people's officer at its roots, with a hole directly through the 'grace of God;' which he carried in his jacket pocket covering his heart, as if he thought a bit of sheepskin was a breastplate against a squatter's bullet! Now, Ellen, you needn't be troubled for it never strictly was brought home to him; and there were fifty others who had pitched in that neighbourhood with just the same authority from the law."

The poor girl shuddered, struggling powerfully to suppress the sigh which arose in spite of her efforts, as if from the very bottom of her heart.

Thoroughly satisfied that he understood the character of the emigrants, by the short but comprehensive description conveyed in Paul's reply, the old man raised no further question concerning the readiness of Ishmael to revenge his wrongs, but rather followed the train of thought which was suggested to his experience, by the occasion.

"Each one knows the ties which bind him to his fellow-creatures best," he answered. "Though it is greatly to be mourned that colour, and property, and tongue, and l'arning should make so wide a difference in those who, after all, are but the children of one father! Howsomever," he continued, by a transition not a little characteristic of the pursuits and feelings of the man, "as this is a business in which there is much more likelihood of a fight than need for a sermon, it is best to be prepared for what may follow.—Hush! there is a movement below; it is an equal chance that we are seen."

"The family is stirring," cried Ellen, with a tremor that announced nearly as much terror at the approach of her friends, as she had before manifested at the presence of her enemies. "Go, Paul, leave me. You, at least, must not be seen!"

"If I leave you, Ellen, in this desert before I see you safe in the care of old Ishmael, at least, may I never hear the hum of another bee, or, what is worse, fail in sight to line him to his hive!"

"You forget this good old man. He will not leave me. Though I am sure, Paul, we have parted before, where there has been more of a desert than this."

"Never! These Indians may come whooping back, and then where are you! Half way to the Rocky Mountains before a man can fairly strike the line of your flight. What think you, old trapper? How long may it be before these Tetons, as you call them, will be coming for the rest of old Ishmael's goods and chattels?"

"No fear of them," returned the old man, laughing in his own peculiar and silent manner; "I warrant me the devils will be scampering after their beasts these six hours yet! Listen! you may hear them in the willow bottoms at this very moment; ay, your real Sioux cattle will run like so many long-legged elks. Hist! crouch again into the grass, down with ye both; as I'm a miserable piece of clay, I heard the ticking of a gunlock!"

The trapper did not allow his companions time to hesitate, but dragging them both after him, he nearly buried his own person in the fog of the prairie, while he was speaking. It was fortunate that the senses of the aged hunter remained so acute, and that he had lost none of his readiness of action. The three were scarcely bowed to the ground, when their ears were saluted with the well-known, sharp, short, reports of the western rifle, and instantly, the whizzing of the ragged lead was heard, buzzing within dangerous proximity of their heads.

"Well done, young chips! well done, old block!" whispered Paul, whose spirits no danger nor situation could entirely depress. "As pretty a volley, as one would wish to bear on the wrong end of a rifle! What d'ye say, trapper! here is likely to be a three-cornered war. Shall I give 'em as good as they send?"

"Give them nothing but fair words," returned the other, hastily, "or you are both lost."

"I'm not certain it would much mend the matter, if I were to speak with my tongue instead of the piece," said Paul, in a tone half jocular half bitter.

"For the sake of heaven, do not let them hear you!" cried Ellen. "Go, Paul, go; you can easily quit us now!"

Several shots in quick succession, each sending its dangerous messenger, still nearer than the preceding discharge, cut short her speech, no less in prudence than in terror.

"This must end," said the trapper, rising with the dignity of one bent only on the importance of his object. "I know not what need ye may have, children, to fear those you should both love and honour, but something must be done to save your lives. A few hours more or less can never be missed from the time of one who has already numbered so many days; therefore I will advance. Here is a clear space around you. Profit by it as you need, and may God bless and prosper each of you, as ye deserve!"

Without waiting for any reply, the trapper walked boldly down the declivity in his front, taking the direction of the encampment, neither quickening his pace in trepidation, nor suffering it to be retarded by fear. The light of the moon fell brighter for a moment on his tall, gaunt, form, and served to warn the emigrants of his approach. Indifferent, however to this unfavourable circumstance, he held his way, silently and steadily towards the copse, until a threatening voice met him with a challenge of—

"Who comes; friend or foe?"

"Friend," was the reply; "one who has lived too long to disturb the close of life with quarrels."

"But not so long as to forget the tricks of his youth," said Ishmael, rearing his huge frame from beneath the slight covering of a low bush, and meeting the trapper, face to face; "old man, you have brought this tribe of red devils upon us, and to-morrow you will be sharing the booty."

"What have you lost?" calmly demanded the trapper.

"Eight as good mares as ever travelled in gears, besides a foal that is worth thirty of the brightest Mexicans that bear the face of the King of Spain. Then the woman has not a cloven hoof for her dairy, or her loom, and I believe even the grunterns, foot sore as they be, are ploughing the prairie. And now, stranger," he added, dropping the butt of his rifle on the hard earth, with a violence and clatter that would have intimidated one less firm than the man he addressed, "how many of these creatures may fall to your lot?"

"Horses have I never craved, nor even used; though few have journeyed over more of the wide lands of America than myself, old and feeble as I seem. But little use is there for a horse among the hills and woods of York—that is, as York was, but as I greatly fear York is no longer—as for woollen covering and cow's milk, I covet no such womanly fashions! The beasts of the field give me food and raiment. No, I crave no cloth better than the skin of a deer, nor any meat richer than his flesh."

The sincere manner of the trapper, as he uttered this simple vindication, was not entirely thrown away on the emigrant, whose dull nature was gradually quickening into a flame, that might speedily have burst forth with dangerous violence. He listened like one who doubted, not entirely convinced: and he muttered between his teeth the denunciation, with which a moment before he intended to precede the summary vengeance he had certainly meditated.

"This is brave talking," he at length grumbled; "but to my judgment, too lawyer-like, for a straight forward, fair-weather, and foul-weather hunter."

"I claim to be no better than a trapper," the other meekly answered.

"Hunter or trapper—there is little difference. I have come, old man, into these districts because I found the law sitting too tight upon me, and am not over fond of neighbours who can't settle a dispute without troubling a justice and twelve men; but I didn't come to be robb'd of my plunder, and then to say thank'ee to the man who did it!"

"He, who ventures far into the prairies, must abide by the ways of its owners."

"Owners!" echoed the squatter, "I am as rightful an owner of the land I stand on, as any governor in the States! Can you tell me, stranger, where the law or the reason, is to be found, which says that one man shall have a section, or a town, or perhaps a county to his use, and another have to beg for earth to make his grave in? This is not nature, and I deny that it is law. That is, your legal law."

"I cannot say that you are wrong," returned the trapper, whose opinions on this important topic, though drawn from very different premises, were in singular accordance with those of his companion, "and I have often thought and said as much, when and where I have believed my voice could be heard. But your beasts are stolen by them who claim to be masters of all they find in the deserts."

"They had better not dispute that matter with a man who knows better," said the other in a portentous voice, though it seemed deep and sluggish as he who spoke.

"I call myself a fair trader, and one who gives to his chaps as good as he receives. You saw the Indians?"

"I did—they held me a prisoner, while they stole into your camp."

"It would have been more like a white man and a Christian, to have let me known as much in better season," retorted Ishmael, casting another ominous sidelong glance at the trapper, as if still meditating evil. "I am not much given to call every man, I fall in with, cousin, but colour should be something, when Christians meet in such a place as this. But what is done, is done, and cannot be mended, by words. Come out of your ambush, boys; here is no one but the old man: he has eaten of my bread, and should be our friend; though there is such good reason to suspect him of harbouring with our enemies."

The trapper made no reply to the harsh suspicion which the other did not scruple to utter without the smallest delicacy, notwithstanding the explanations and denials to which he had just listened. The summons of the unnurtured squatter brought an immediate accession to their party. Four or five of his sons made their appearance from beneath as many covers, where they had been posted under the impression that the figures they had seen, on the swell of the prairie, were a part of the Sioux band. As each man approached, and dropped his rifle into the hollow of his arm, he cast an indolent but enquiring glance at the stranger, though neither of them expressed the least curiosity to know whence he had come or why he was there. This forbearance, however, proceeded only in part, from the sluggishness of their common temper; for long and frequent experience in scenes of a similar character, had taught them the virtue of discretion. The trapper endured their sullen scrutiny with the steadiness of one as practised as themselves, and with the entire composure of innocence. Content with the momentary examination he had made, the eldest of the group, who was in truth the delinquent sentinel by whose remissness the wily Mahtoree had so well profited, turned towards his father and said bluntly—

"If this man is all that is left of the party I saw on the upland, yonder, we haven't altogether thrown away our ammunition."

“Asa, you are right,” said the father, turning suddenly on the trapper, a lost idea being recalled by the hint of his son. “How is it, stranger; there were three of you, just now, or there is no virtue in moonlight?”

“If you had seen the Tetons racing across the prairies, like so many black-looking evil ones, on the heels of your cattle, my friend, it would have been an easy matter to have fancied them a thousand.”

“Ay, for a town bred boy, or a skeary woman; though for that matter, there is old Esther; she has no more fear of a red-skin than of a suckling cub, or of a wolf pup. I’ll warrant ye, had your thievish devils made their push by the light of the sun, the good woman would have been smartly at work among them, and the Siouxes would have found she was not given to part with her cheese and her butter without a price. But there’ll come a time, stranger, right soon, when justice will have its dues, and that too, without the help of what is called the law. We ar’ of a slow breed, it may be said, and it is often said, of us; but slow is sure; and there ar’ few men living, who can say they ever struck a blow, that they did not get one as hard in return, from Ishmael Bush.”

“Then has Ishmael Bush followed the instinct of the beasts rather than the principle which ought to belong to his kind,” returned the stubborn trapper. “I have struck many a blow myself, but never have I felt the same ease of mind that of right belongs to a man who follows his reason, after slaying even a fawn when there was no call for his meat or hide, as I have felt at leaving a Mingo unburied in the woods, when following the trade of open and honest warfare.”

“What, you have been a soldier, have you, trapper! I made a forage or two among the Cherokees, when I was a lad myself; and I followed mad Anthony,[\*] one season, through the beeches; but there was altogether too much tatooing and regulating among his troops for me; so I left him without calling on the paymaster to settle my arrearages. Though, as Esther afterwards boasted, she had made such use of the pay-ticket, that the States gained no great sum, by the oversight. You have heard of such a man as mad Anthony, if you tarried long among the soldiers.”

[\*] Anthony Wayne, a Pennsylvanian distinguished in the war of the revolution, and subsequently against the Indians of the west, for his daring as a general, by which he gained from his followers the title of Mad Anthony. General Wayne was the son of the person mentioned in the life of West as commanding the regiment which excited his military ardour.

“I fou’t my last battle, as I hope, under his orders,” returned the trapper, a gleam of sunshine shooting from his dim eyes, as if the event was recollected with pleasure, and then a sudden shade of sorrow succeeding, as though he felt a secret admonition against dwelling on the violent scenes in which he had so often been an actor. “I was passing from the States on the sea-shore into these far regions, when I cross’d the trail of his army, and I fell in, on his rear, just as a looker-on; but when they got to blows, the crack of my rifle was heard among the rest, though to my shame it may be said, I never knew the right of the quarrel as well as a man of threescore and ten should know the reason of his acts afore he takes mortal life, which is a gift he never can return!”

“Come, stranger,” said the emigrant, his rugged nature a good deal softened when he found that they had fought on the same side in the wild warfare of the west, “it is of small account, what may be the ground-work of the disturbance, when it’s a Christian ag’in a savage. We shall hear more of this horse-stealing to-morrow; to-night we can do no wiser or safer thing than to sleep.”

So saying, Ishmael deliberately led the way back towards his rifled encampment, and ushered the man, whose life a few minutes before had been in real jeopardy from his resentment, into the presence of his family. Here, with a very few words of explanation, mingled with scarce but ominous denunciations against the plunderers, he made his wife acquainted with the state of things on the prairie, and announced his own determination to compensate himself for his broken rest, by devoting the remainder of the night to sleep.

The trapper gave his ready assent to the measure, and adjusted his gaunt form on the pile of brush that was offered him, with as much composure as a sovereign could resign himself to sleep, in the security of his capital and surrounded by his armed protectors. The old man did not close his eyes, however, until he had assured himself that Ellen Wade was among the females of the family, and that her relation, or lover, whichever he might be, had observed the caution of keeping himself out of view: after which he slept, though with the peculiar watchfulness of one long accustomed to vigilance, even in the hours of deepest night.

## CHAPTER VI

He is too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd,  
As it were too peregrinate, as I may call it.  
—Shakspeare.

The Anglo-American is apt to boast, and not without reason, that his nation may claim a descent more truly honourable than that of any other people whose history is to be credited. Whatever might have been the weaknesses of the original colonists, their virtues have rarely been disputed. If they were superstitious, they were sincerely pious, and, consequently, honest. The descendants of these simple and single-minded provincials have been content to reject the ordinary and artificial means by which honours have been perpetuated in families, and have substituted a standard which brings the individual himself to the ordeal of the public estimation, paying as little deference as may be to those who have gone before him. This forbearance, self-denial, or common sense, or by whatever term it may be thought proper to distinguish the measure, has subjected the nation to the imputation of having an ignoble origin. Were it worth the enquiry, it would be found that more than a just proportion of the renowned names of the mother-country are, at this hour, to be found in her *ci-devant* colonies; and it is a fact well known to the few who have wasted sufficient time to become the masters of so unimportant a subject, that the direct descendants of many a failing line, which the policy of England has seen fit to sustain by collateral supporters, are now discharging the simple duties of citizens in the bosom of this republic. The hive has remained stationary, and they who flutter around the venerable straw are wont to claim the empty distinction of antiquity, regardless alike of the frailty of their tenement and of the enjoyments of the numerous and vigorous swarms that are culling the fresher sweets of a virgin world. But as this is a subject which belongs rather to the politician and historian than to the humble narrator of the homebred incidents we are about to reveal, we must confine our reflections to such matters as have an immediate relation to the subject of the tale.

Although the citizen of the United States may claim so just an ancestry, he is far from being exempt from the penalties of his fallen race. Like causes are well known to produce like effects. That tribute, which it would seem nations must ever pay, by way of a weary probation, around the shrine of Ceres, before they can be indulged in her fullest favours, is in some measure exacted in America, from the descendant instead of the ancestor. The march of civilisation with us, has a strong analogy to that of all coming events, which are known “to cast their shadows before.” The gradations of society, from that state which is called refined to that which approaches as near barbarity as connection with an intelligent people will readily allow, are to be traced from the bosom of the States, where wealth, luxury and the arts are beginning to seat themselves, to those distant, and ever-receding borders which mark the skirts, and announce the approach, of the nation, as moving mists precede the signs of day.

Here, and here only, is to be found that widely spread, though far from numerous class, which may be at all likened to those who have paved the way for the intellectual progress of nations, in the old world. The resemblance between the American borderer and his European prototype is singular, though not always uniform. Both might be called without restraint; the one being above, the other beyond the reach of the law—brave, because they were inured to dangers—proud, because they were independent, and vindictive, because each was the avenger of his own wrongs. It would be unjust to the borderer to pursue the parallel much farther. He is irreligious, because he has inherited the knowledge that religion does not exist in forms, and his reason rejects mockery. He is not a knight, because he has not the power to bestow distinctions; and he has not the power, because he is the offspring and not the parent of a system. In what manner these several qualities are exhibited, in some of the most strongly marked of the latter class, will be seen in the course of the ensuing narrative.

Ishmael Bush had passed the whole of a life of more than fifty years on the skirts of society. He boasted that he had never dwelt where he might not safely fell every tree he could view from his own threshold; that the law had rarely been known to enter his clearing, and that his ears had never willingly admitted the sound of a church bell. His exertions seldom exceeded his wants, which were peculiar to his class, and rarely failed of being supplied. He had no respect for any learning except that of the leech; because he was ignorant of the application of any other intelligence than such as met the senses. His deference to this particular branch of science had induced him to listen to the application of a medical man, whose thirst for natural history had led him to the desire of profiting by the migratory propensities of the squatter. This gentleman he had cordially received into his family, or rather under his protection, and they had journeyed together, thus far through the prairies, in perfect harmony: Ishmael often felicitating his wife on the possession of a companion, who would be so serviceable in their new abode, wherever it might chance to be, until the family were thoroughly “acclimated.” The pursuits of the naturalist frequently led him, however, for days at a time, from the direct line of the route of the squatter, who rarely seemed to have any other guide than the sun. Most men would have deemed themselves fortunate to have been absent on the perilous occasion of the Sioux inroad, as was Obed Bat, (or as he was fond of hearing himself called, Battius,) M.D. and fellow of several *cis-Atlantic* learned societies—the adventurous gentleman in question.

Although the sluggish nature of Ishmael was not actually awakened, it was sorely pricked by the liberties which had just been taken with his property. He slept, however, for it was the hour he had allotted to that refreshment, and because he knew how impotent any exertions to recover his effects must prove in the darkness of midnight. He also knew the danger of his present situation too well to hazard what was left in pursuit of that which was lost. Much as the inhabitants of the prairies were known to love horses, their attachment to many other articles, still in the possession of the travellers, was equally well understood. It was a common artifice to scatter the herds, and to profit by the confusion. But Mahtoree had, as it would seem in this particular undervalued the acuteness of the man he had assailed. The phlegm with which the squatter learned his loss, has already been seen, and it now remains to exhibit the results of his more matured determinations.

Though the encampment contained many an eye that was long unclosed, and many an ear that listened greedily to catch the faintest

evidence of any new alarm, it lay in deep quiet during the remainder of the night. Silence and fatigue finally performed their accustomed offices, and before the morning all but the sentinels were again buried in sleep. How well these indolent watchers discharged their duties, after the assault, has never been known, inasmuch as nothing occurred to confirm or to disprove their subsequent vigilance.

Just as day, however, began to dawn, and a grey light was falling from the heavens, on the dusky objects of the plain, the half startled, anxious, and yet blooming countenance of Ellen Wade was reared above the confused mass of children, among whom she had clustered on her stolen return to the camp. Arising warily she stepped lightly across the recumbent bodies, and proceeded with the same caution to the utmost limits of the defences of Ishmael. Here she listened, as if she doubted the propriety of venturing further. The pause was only momentary, however; and long before the drowsy eyes of the sentinel, who overlooked the spot where she stood, had time to catch a glimpse of her active form, it had glided along the bottom, and stood on the summit of the nearest eminence.

Ellen now listened intently anxious to catch some other sound, than the breathing of the morning air, which faintly rustled the herbage at her feet. She was about to turn in disappointment from the enquiry, when the tread of human feet making their way through the matted grass met her ear. Springing eagerly forward, she soon beheld the outlines of a figure advancing up the eminence, on the side opposite to the camp. She had already uttered the name of Paul, and was beginning to speak in the hurried and eager voice with which female affection is apt to greet a friend, when, drawing back, the disappointed girl closed her salutation by coldly adding—"I did not expect, Doctor, to meet you at this unusual hour."

"All hours and all seasons are alike, my good Ellen, to the genuine lover of nature,"—returned a small, slightly made, but exceedingly active man, dressed in an odd mixture of cloth and skins, a little past the middle age, and who advanced directly to her side, with the familiarity of an old acquaintance; "and he who does not know how to find things to admire by this grey light, is ignorant of a large portion of the blessings he enjoys."

"Very true," said Ellen, suddenly recollecting the necessity of accounting for her own appearance abroad at that unseasonable hour; "I know many who think the earth has a pleasanter look in the night, than when seen by the brightest sunshine."

"Ah! Their organs of sight must be too convex! But the man who wishes to study the active habits of the feline race, or the variety, albinos, must, indeed, be stirring at this hour. I dare say, there are men who prefer even looking at objects by twilight, for the simple reason, that they see better at that time of the day."

"And is this the cause why you are so much abroad in the night?"

"I am abroad at night, my good girl, because the earth in its diurnal revolutions leaves the light of the sun but half the time on any given meridian, and because what I have to do cannot be performed in twelve or fifteen consecutive hours. Now have I been off two days from the family, in search of a plant, that is known to exist on the tributaries of La Platte, without seeing even a blade of grass that is not already enumerated and classed."

"You have been unfortunate, Doctor, but—"

"Unfortunate!" echoed the little man, sidelining nigher to his companion, and producing his tablets with an air in which exultation struggled, strangely, with an affectation of self-abasement. "No, no, Ellen, I am any thing but unfortunate. Unless, indeed, a man may be so called, whose fortune is made, whose fame may be said to be established for ever, whose name will go down to posterity with that of Buffon—Buffon! a mere compiler: one who flourishes on the foundation of other men's labours. No; *pari passu* with Solander, who bought his knowledge with pain and privations!"

"Have you discovered a mine, Doctor Bat?"

"More than a mine; a treasure coined, and fit for instant use, girl.—Listen! I was making the angle necessary to intersect the line of your uncle's march, after my fruitless search, when I heard sounds like the explosion produced by fire arms—"

"Yes," exclaimed Ellen, eagerly, "we had an alarm—"

"And thought I was lost," continued the man of science too much bent on his own ideas, to understand her interruption. "Little danger of that! I made my own base, knew the length of the perpendicular by calculation, and to draw the hypotenuse had nothing to do but to work my angle. I supposed the guns were fired for my benefit, and changed my course for the sounds—not that I think the sense more accurate, or even as accurate as a mathematical calculation, but I feared that some of the children might need my services."

"They are all happily—"

"Listen," interrupted the other, already forgetting his affected anxiety for his patients, in the greater importance of the present subject. "I had crossed a large tract of prairie—for sound is conveyed far where there is little obstruction—when I heard the trampling of feet, as if bisons were beating the earth. Then I caught a distant view of a herd of quadrupeds, rushing up and down the swells—animals, which would have still remained unknown and undescribed, had it not been for a most felicitous accident! One, and he a noble specimen of the whole! was running a little apart from the rest. The herd made an inclination in my direction, in which the solitary animal coincided, and this brought him within fifty yards of the spot where I stood. I profited by the opportunity, and by the aid of steel and taper, I wrote his description on the spot. I would have given a thousand dollars, Ellen, for a single shot from the rifle of one of the boys!"

"You carry a pistol, Doctor, why didn't you use it?" said the half inattentive girl, anxiously examining the prairie, but still lingering where she stood, quite willing to be detained.

"Ay, but it carries nothing but the most minute particles of lead, adapted to the destruction of the larger insects and reptiles. No, I did better than to attempt waging a war, in which I could not be the victor. I recorded the event; noting each particular with the precision necessary to science. You shall hear, Ellen; for you are a good and improving girl, and by retaining what you learn in this way, may yet be of great service to learning, should any accident occur to me. Indeed, my worthy Ellen, mine is a pursuit, which has its dangers as well as that of the warrior. This very night," he continued, glancing his eye behind him, "this awful night, has the principle of life,



itself, been in great danger of extinction!”

“By what?”

“By the monster I have discovered. It approached me often, and ever as I receded, it continued to advance. I believe nothing but the little lamp, I carried, was my protector. I kept it between us, whilst I wrote, making it serve the double purpose of luminary and shield. But you shall hear the character of the beast, and you may then judge of the risks we promoters of science run in behalf of mankind.”

The naturalist raised his tablets to the heavens, and disposed himself to read as well as he could, by the dim light they yet shed upon the plain; premising with saying—

“Listen, girl, and you shall hear, with what a treasure it has been my happy lot to enrich the pages of natural history!”

“Is it then a creature of your forming?” said Ellen, turning away from her fruitless examination, with a sudden lighting of her brightly blue eyes, that showed she knew how to play with the foible of her learned companion.

“Is the power to give life to inanimate matter the gift of man? I would it were! You should speedily see a *Historia Naturalis Americana*, that would put the sneering imitators of the Frenchman, De Buffon, to shame! A great improvement might be made in the formation of all quadrupeds; especially those in which velocity is a virtue. Two of the inferior limbs should be on the principle of the lever; wheels, perhaps, as they are now formed; though I have not yet determined whether the improvement might be better applied to the anterior or posterior members, inasmuch as I am yet to learn whether dragging or shoving requires the greatest muscular exertion. A natural exudation of the animal might assist in overcoming the friction, and a powerful momentum be obtained. But all this is hopeless—at least for the present!”—he added, raising his tablets again to the light, and reading aloud; “Oct. 6, 1805. that’s merely the date, which I dare say you know better than I—mem. Quadruped; seen by star-light, and by the aid of a pocket-lamp, in the prairies of North America—see *Journal for Latitude and Meridian*. Genus—unknown; therefore named after the discoverer, and from the happy coincidence of being seen in the evening—*Vespertilio Horribilis*, *Americanus*. Dimensions (by estimation)—Greatest length, eleven feet; height, six feet; head, erect; nostrils, expansive; eyes, expressive and fierce; teeth, serrated and abundant; tail, horizontal, waving, and slightly feline; feet, large and hairy; talons, long, curved, dangerous; ears, inconspicuous; horns, elongated, diverging, and formidable; colour, plumbeous-ashy, with fiery spots; voice, sonorous, martial, and appalling; habits, gregarious, carnivorous, fierce, and fearless. There,” exclaimed Obed, when he had ended this sententious but comprehensive description, “there is an animal, which will be likely to dispute with the lion his title to be called the king of the beasts!”

“I know not the meaning of all you have said, Doctor Battius,” returned the quick-witted girl, who understood the weakness of the philosopher, and often indulged him with a title he loved so well to hear; “but I shall think it dangerous to venture far from the camp, if such monsters are prowling over the prairies.”

“You may well call it prowling,” returned the naturalist, nestling still closer to her side, and dropping his voice to such low and undignified tones of confidence, as conveyed a meaning still more pointed than he had intended. “I have never before experienced such a trial of the nervous system; there was a moment, I acknowledge, when the fortiter in re faltered before so terrible an enemy; but the love of natural science bore me up, and brought me off in triumph!”

“You speak a language so different from that we use in Tennessee,” said Ellen, struggling to conceal her laughter, “that I hardly know whether I understand your meaning. If I am right, you wish to say you were chicken-hearted.”

“An absurd simile drawn from an ignorance of the formation of the biped. The heart of a chicken has a just proportion to its other organs, and the domestic fowl is, in a state of nature, a gallant bird. Ellen,” he added, with a countenance so solemn as to produce an impression on the attentive girl, “I was pursued, hunted, and in a danger that I scorn to dwell on—what’s that?”

Ellen started; for the earnestness and simple sincerity of her companion’s manner had produced a certain degree of credulity, even on her buoyant mind. Looking in the direction indicated by the Doctor, she beheld, in fact, a beast coursing over the prairie, and making a straight and rapid approach to the very spot they occupied. The day was not yet sufficiently advanced to enable her to distinguish its form and character, though enough was discernible to induce her to imagine it a fierce and savage animal.

“It comes! it comes!” exclaimed the Doctor, fumbling, by a sort of instinct, for his tablets, while he fairly tottered on his feet under the powerful efforts he made to maintain his ground. “Now, Ellen, has fortune given me an opportunity to correct the errors made by star-light,—hold,—ashy-plumbeous,—no ears,—horns, excessive.” His voice and hand were both arrested by a roar, or rather a shriek from the beast, that was sufficiently terrific to appal even a stouter heart than that of the naturalist. The cries of the animal passed over the prairie in strange cadences, and then succeeded a deep and solemn silence, that was only broken by an uncontrolled fit of merriment from the more musical voice of Ellen Wade. In the mean time the naturalist stood like a statue of amazement, permitting a well-grown ass, against whose approach he no longer offered his boasted shield of light, to smell about his person, without comment or hinderance.

“It is your own ass,” cried Ellen, the instant she found breath for words; “your own patient, hard working, hack!”

The Doctor rolled his eyes from the beast to the speaker, and from the speaker to the beast; but gave no audible expression of his wonder.

“Do you refuse to know an animal that has laboured so long in your service?” continued the laughing girl. “A beast, that I have heard you say a thousand times, has served you well, and whom you loved like a brother!”

“*Asinus Domesticus*!” ejaculated the Doctor, drawing his breath like one who had been near suffocation. “There is no doubt of the genus; and I will always maintain that the animal is not of the species, *equus*. This is undeniably *Asinus* himself, Ellen Wade; but this is not the *Vespertilio Horribilis* of the prairies! Very different animals, I can assure you, young woman, and differently characterized in every important particular. That, carnivorous,” he continued, glancing his eye at the open page of his tablets; “this, granivorous; habits, fierce, dangerous; habits, patient, abstemious; ears, inconspicuous; ears, elongated; horns, diverging, &c., horns, none!”

He was interrupted by another burst of merriment from Ellen, which served, in some measure, to recall him to his recollection.

“The image of the *Vespertilio* was on the retina,” the astounded enquirer into the secrets of nature observed, in a manner that seemed a little apologetic, “and I was silly enough to mistake my own faithful beast for the monster. Though even now I greatly marvel to see this animal running at large!”

Ellen then proceeded to explain the history of the attack and its results. She described, with an accuracy that might have raised suspicions of her own movements in the mind of one less simple than her auditor, the manner in which the beasts burst out of the encampment, and the headlong speed with which they had dispersed themselves over the open plain. Although she forebore to say as much in terms, she so managed as to present before the eyes of her listener the strong probability of his having mistaken the frightened drove for savage beasts, and then terminated her account by a lamentation for their loss, and some very natural remarks on the helpless condition in which it had left the family. The naturalist listened in silent wonder, neither interrupting her narrative nor suffering a single exclamation of surprise to escape him. The keen-eyed girl, however, saw that as she proceeded, the important leaf was torn from the tablets, in a manner which showed that their owner had got rid of his delusion at the same instant. From that moment the world has heard no more of the *Vespertilio Horribilis Americanus*, and the natural sciences have irretrievably lost an important link in that great animated chain which is said to connect earth and heaven, and in which man is thought to be so familiarly complicated with the monkey.

When Dr. Bat was put in full possession of all the circumstances of the inroad, his concern immediately took a different direction. He had left sundry folios, and certain boxes well stored with botanical specimens and defunct animals, under the good keeping of Ishmael, and it immediately struck his acute mind, that marauders as subtle as the Siouxes would never neglect the opportunity to despoil him of these treasures. Nothing that Ellen could say to the contrary served to appease his apprehensions, and, consequently, they separated; he to relieve his doubts and fears together, and she to glide, as swiftly and silently as she had just before passed it, into the still and solitary tent.

## CHAPTER VII

What! fifty of my followers, at a clap!

—Lear.

The day had now fairly opened on the seemingly interminable waste of the prairie. The entrance of Obed at such a moment into the camp, accompanied as it was by vociferous lamentations over his anticipated loss, did not fail to rouse the drowsy family of the squatter. Ishmael and his sons, together with the forbidding looking brother of his wife, were all speedily afoot; and then, as the sun began to shed his light on the place, they became gradually apprised of the extent of their loss.

Ishmael looked round upon the motionless and heavily loaded vehicles with his teeth firmly compressed, cast a glance at the amazed and helpless group of children, which clustered around their sullen but desponding mother, and walked out upon the open land, as if he found the air of the encampment too confined. He was followed by several of the men, who were attentive observers, watching the dark expression of his eye as the index of their own future movements. The whole proceeded in profound and moody silence to the summit of the nearest swell, whence they could command an almost boundless view of the naked plains. Here nothing was visible but a solitary buffalo, that gleaned a meagre subsistence from the decaying herbage, at no great distance, and the ass of the physician, who profited by his freedom to enjoy a meal richer than common.

"Yonder is one of the creatures left by the villains to mock us," said Ishmael, glancing his eye towards the latter, "and that the meanest of the stock. This is a hard country to make a crop in, boys; and yet food must be found to fill many hungry mouths!"

"The rifle is better than the hoe, in such a place as this," returned the eldest of his sons, kicking the hard and thirsty soil on which he stood, with an air of contempt. "It is good for such as they who make their dinner better on beggars' beans than on homminy. A crow would shed tears if obliged by its errand to fly across the district."

"What say you, trapper?" returned the father, showing the slight impression his powerful heel had made on the compact earth, and laughing with frightful ferocity. "Is this the quality of land a man would choose who never troubles the county clerk with title deeds?"

"There is richer soil in the bottoms," returned the old man calmly, "and you have passed millions of acres to get to this dreary spot, where he who loves to till the 'arth might have received bushels in return for pints, and that too at the cost of no very grievous labour. If you have come in search of land, you have journeyed hundreds of miles too far, or as many leagues too little."

"There is then a better choice towards the other Ocean?" demanded the squatter, pointing in the direction of the Pacific.

"There is, and I have seen it all," was the answer of the other, who dropped his rifle to the earth, and stood leaning on its barrel, like one who recalled the scenes he had witnessed with melancholy pleasure. "I have seen the waters of the two seas! On one of them was I born, and raised to be a lad like yonder tumbling boy. America has grown, my men, since the days of my youth, to be a country larger than I once had thought the world itself to be. Near seventy years I dwelt in York, province and state together:—you've been in York, 'tis like?"

"Not I—not I; I never visited the towns; but often have heard the place you speak of named. 'Tis a wide clearing there, I reckon."

"Too wide! too wide! They scourge the very 'arth with their axes. Such hills and hunting-grounds as I have seen stripped of the gifts of the Lord, without remorse or shame! I tarried till the mouths of my hounds were deafened by the blows of the chopper, and then I came west in search of quiet. It was a grievous journey that I made; a grievous toil to pass through falling timber and to breathe the thick air of smoky clearings, week after week, as I did! 'Tis a far country too, that state of York from this!"

"It lies ag'in the outer edge of old Kentuck, I reckon; though what the distance may be I never knew."

"A gull would have to fan a thousand miles of air to find the eastern sea. And yet it is no mighty reach to hunt across, when shade and game are plenty! The time has been when I followed the deer in the mountains of the Delaware and Hudson, and took the beaver on the streams of the upper lakes in the same season, but my eye was quick and certain at that day, and my limbs were like the legs of a moose! The dam of Hector," dropping his look kindly to the aged hound that crouched at his feet, "was then a pup, and apt to open on the game the moment she struck the scent. She gave me a deal of trouble, that slut, she did!"

"Your hound is old, stranger, and a rap on the head would prove a mercy to the beast."

"The dog is like his master," returned the trapper, without appearing to heed the brutal advice the other gave, "and will number his days, when his work amongst the game is over, and not before. To my eye things seem ordered to meet each other in this creation. 'Tis not the swiftest running deer that always throws off the hounds, nor the biggest arm that holds the truest rifle. Look around you, men; what will the Yankee Choppers say, when they have cut their path from the eastern to the western waters, and find that a hand, which can lay the 'arth bare at a blow, has been here and swept the country, in very mockery of their wickedness. They will turn on their tracks like a fox that doubles, and then the rank smell of their own footsteps will show them the madness of their waste. Howsomever, these are thoughts that are more likely to rise in him who has seen the folly of eighty seasons, than to teach wisdom to men still bent on the pleasures of their kind! You have need, yet, of a stirring time, if you think to escape the craft and hatred of the burnt-wood Indians. They claim to be the lawful owners of this country, and seldom leave a white more than the skin he boasts of, when once they get the power, as they always have the will, to do him harm."

"Old man," said Ishmael sternly, "to which people do you belong? You have the colour and speech of a Christian, while it seems that your heart is with the redskins."

"To me there is little difference in nations. The people I loved most are scattered as the sands of the dry river-beds fly before the fall hurricanes, and life is too short to make use and custom with strangers, as one can do with such as he has dwelt amongst for years. Still

am I a man without the cross of Indian blood; and what is due from a warrior to his nation, is owing by me to the people of the States; though little need have they, with their militia and their armed boats, of help from a single arm of fourscore.”

“Since you own your kin, I may ask a simple question. Where are the Siouxes who have stolen my cattle?”

“Where is the herd of buffaloes, which was chased by the panther across this plain, no later than the morning of yesterday? It is as hard—”

“Friend,” said Dr. Battius, who had hitherto been an attentive listener, but who now felt a sudden impulse to mingle in the discourse, “I am grieved when I find a venator or hunter, of your experience and observation, following the current of vulgar error. The animal you describe is in truth a species of the *bos ferus*, (or *bos sylvestris*, as he has been happily called by the poets,) but, though of close affinity, it is altogether distinct from the common *bubulus*. Bison is the better word; and I would suggest the necessity of adopting it in future, when you shall have occasion to allude to the species.”

“Bison or buffalo, it makes but little matter. The creatur’ is the same, call it by what name you will, and—”

“Pardon me, venerable venator; as classification is the very soul of the natural sciences, the animal or vegetable must, of necessity, be characterised by the peculiarities of its species, which is always indicated by the name—”

“Friend,” said the trapper, a little positively, “would the tail of a beaver make the worse dinner for calling it a mink; or could you eat of the wolf, with relish, because some bookish man had given it the name of venison?”

As these questions were put with no little earnestness and some spirit, there was every probability that a hot discussion would have succeeded between two men, of whom one was so purely practical and the other so much given to theory, had not Ishmael seen fit to terminate the dispute, by bringing into view a subject that was much more important to his own immediate interests.

“Beavers’ tails and minks’ flesh may do to talk about before a maple fire and a quiet hearth,” interrupted the squatter, without the smallest deference to the interested feelings of the disputants; “but something more than foreign words, or words of any sort, is now needed. Tell me, trapper, where are your Siouxes skulking?”

“It would be as easy to tell you the colours of the hawk that is floating beneath yonder white cloud! When a red-skin strikes his blow, he is not apt to wait until he is paid for the evil deed in lead.”

“Will the beggarly savages believe they have enough, when they find themselves master of all the stock?”

“Natur’ is much the same, let it be covered by what skin it may. Do you ever find your longings after riches less when you have made a good crop, than before you were master of a kernel of corn? If you do, you differ from what the experience of a long life tells me is the common cravings of man.”

“Speak plainly, old stranger,” said the squatter, striking the butt of his rifle heavily on the earth, his dull capacity finding no pleasure in a discourse that was conducted in so obscure allusions; “I have asked a simple question, and one I know well that you can answer.”

“You are right, you are right. I can answer, for I have too often seen the disposition of my kind to mistake it, when evil is stirring. When the Siouxes have gathered in the beasts, and have made sure that you are not upon their heels, they will be back nibbling like hungry wolves to take the bait they have left or it may be, they’ll show the temper of the great bears, that are found at the falls of the Long River, and strike at once with the paw, without stopping to nose their prey.”

“You have then seen the animals you mention!” exclaimed Dr. Battius, who had now been thrown out of the conversation quite as long as his impatience could well brook, and who approached the subject with his tablets ready opened, as a book of reference. “Can you tell me if what you encountered was of the species, *ursus horribilis*—with the ears, rounded—front, arquated—eyes—destitute of the remarkable supplemental lid—with six incisores, one false, and four perfect molares—”

“Trapper, go on, for we are engaged in reasonable discourse,” interrupted Ishmael; “you believe we shall see more of the robbers.”

“Nay—nay—I do not call them robbers, for it is the usage of their people, and what may be called the prairie law.”

“I have come five hundred miles to find a place where no man can ding the words of the law in my ears,” said Ishmael, fiercely, “and I am not in a humour to stand quietly at a bar, while a red-skin sits in judgment. I tell you, trapper, if another Sioux is seen prowling around my camp, wherever it may be, he shall feel the contents of old Kentucky,” slapping his rifle, in a manner that could not be easily misconstrued, “though he wore the medal of Washington,[\*] himself. I call the man a robber who takes that which is not his own.”

[\*] The American government creates chiefs among the western tribes, and decorates them with silver medals bearing the impression of the different presidents. That of Washington is the most prized.

“The Teton, and the Pawnee, and the Konza, and men of a dozen other tribes, claim to own these naked fields.”

“Natur’ gives them the lie in their teeth. The air, the water, and the ground, are free gifts to man, and no one has the power to portion them out in parcels. Man must drink, and breathe, and walk,—and therefore each has a right to his share of ‘arth. Why do not the surveyors of the States set their compasses and run their lines over our heads as well as beneath our feet? Why do they not cover their shining sheep-skins with big words, giving to the landholder, or perhaps he should be called air holder, so many rods of heaven, with the use of such a star for a boundary-mark, and such a cloud to turn a mill?”

As the squatter uttered his wild conceit, he laughed from the very bottom of his chest, in scorn. The deriding but frightful merriment passed from the mouth of one of his ponderous sons to that of the other, until it had made the circuit of the whole family.

“Come, trapper,” continued Ishmael, in a tone of better humour, like a man who feels that he has triumphed, “neither of us, I reckon, has ever had much to do with title-deeds, or county clerks, or blazed trees; therefore we will not waste words on fooleries. You ar’ a man that has tarried long in this clearing, and now I ask your opinion, face to face, without fear or favour, if you had the lead in my business, what would you do?”

The old man hesitated, and seemed to give the required advice with deep reluctance. As every eye, however, was fastened on him,

and whichever way he turned his face, he encountered a look riveted on the lineaments of his own working countenance, he answered in a low, melancholy, tone—

“I have seen too much mortal blood poured out in empty quarrels, to wish ever to hear an angry rifle again. Ten weary years have I sojourned alone on these naked plains, waiting for my hour, and not a blow have I struck ag’in an enemy more humanised than the grizzly bear.”

“Ursus horribilis,” muttered the Doctor.

The speaker paused at the sound of the other's voice, but perceiving it was no more than a sort of mental ejaculation, he continued in the same strain—

“More humanised than the grizzly bear, or the panther of the Rocky Mountains; unless the beaver, which is a wise and knowing animal, may be so reckoned. What would I advise? Even the female buffaloe will fight for her young!”

“It never then shall be said, that Ishmael Bush has less kindness for his children than the bear for her cubs!”

“And yet this is but a naked spot for a dozen men to make head in, ag’in five hundred.”

“Ay, it is so,” returned the squatter, glancing his eye towards his humble camp; “but something might be done, with the wagons and the cotton-wood.”

The trapper shook his head incredulously, and pointed across the rolling plain in the direction of the west, as he answered—

“A rifle would send a bullet from these hills into your very sleeping-cabins; nay, arrows from the thicket in your rear would keep you all burrowed, like so many prairie dogs: it wouldn't do, it wouldn't do. Three long miles from this spot is a place, where as I have often thought in passing across the desert, a stand might be made for days and weeks together, if there were hearts and hands ready to engage in the bloody work.”

Another low, deriding laugh passed among the young men, announcing, in a manner sufficiently intelligible, their readiness to undertake a task even more arduous. The squatter himself eagerly seized the hint which had been so reluctantly extorted from the trapper, who by some singular process of reasoning had evidently persuaded himself that it was his duty to be strictly neutral. A few direct and pertinent enquiries served to obtain the little additional information that was necessary, in order to make the contemplated movement, and then Ishmael, who was, on emergencies, as terrifically energetic, as he was sluggish in common, set about effecting his object without delay.

Notwithstanding the industry and zeal of all engaged, the task was one of great labour and difficulty. The loaded vehicles were to be drawn by hand across a wide distance of plain without track or guide of any sort, except that which the trapper furnished by communicating his knowledge of the cardinal points of the compass. In accomplishing this object, the gigantic strength of the men was taxed to the utmost, nor were the females or the children spared a heavy proportion of the toil. While the sons distributed themselves about the heavily loaded wagons, and drew them by main strength up the neighbouring swell, their mother and Ellen, surrounded by the amazed group of little ones, followed slowly in the rear, bending under the weight of such different articles as were suited to their several strengths.

Ishmael himself superintended and directed the whole, occasionally applying his colossal shoulder to some lagging vehicle, until he saw that the chief difficulty, that of gaining the level of their intended route, was accomplished. Then he pointed out the required course, cautioning his sons to proceed in such a manner that they should not lose the advantage they had with so much labour obtained, and beckoning to the brother of his wife, they returned together to the empty camp.

Throughout the whole of this movement, which occupied an hour of time, the trapper had stood apart, leaning on his rifle, with the aged hound slumbering at his feet, a silent but attentive observer of all that passed. Occasionally, a smile lighted his hard, muscular, but wasted features, like a gleam of sunshine flitting across a ragged ruin, and betrayed the momentary pleasure he found in witnessing from time to time the vast power the youths discovered. Then, as the train drew slowly up the ascent, a cloud of thought and sorrow threw all into the shade again, leaving the expression of his countenance in its usual state of quiet melancholy. As vehicle after vehicle left the place of the encampment, he noted the change, with increasing attention; seldom failing to cast an enquiring look at the little neglected tent, which, with its proper wagon, still remained as before, solitary and apparently forgotten. The summons of Ishmael to his gloomy associate had, however, as it would now seem, this hitherto neglected portion of his effects for its object.

First casting a cautious and suspicious glance on every side of him, the squatter and his companion advanced to the little wagon, and caused it to enter within the folds of the cloth, much in the manner that it had been extricated the preceding evening. They both then disappeared behind the drapery, and many moments of suspense succeeded, during which the old man, secretly urged by a burning desire to know the meaning of so much mystery, insensibly drew nigh to the place, until he stood within a few yards of the proscribed spot. The agitation of the cloth betrayed the nature of the occupation of those whom it concealed, though their work was conducted in rigid silence. It would appear that long practice had made each of the two acquainted with his particular duty; for neither sign nor direction of any sort was necessary from Ishmael, in order to apprise his surly associate of the manner in which he was to proceed. In less time than has been consummated in relating it, the interior portion of the arrangement was completed, when the men re-appeared without the tent. Too busy with his occupation to heed the presence of the trapper, Ishmael began to release the folds of the cloth from the ground, and to dispose of them in such a manner around the vehicle, as to form a sweeping train to the new form the little pavilion had now assumed. The arched roof trembled with the occasional movement of the light vehicle which, it was now apparent, once more supported its secret burden. Just as the work was ended the scowling eye of Ishmael's assistant caught a glimpse of the figure of the attentive observer of their movements. Dropping the shaft, which he had already lifted from the ground preparatory to occupying the place that was usually filled by an animal less reasoning and perhaps less dangerous than himself, he bluntly exclaimed—

“I am a fool, as you often say! But look for yourself: if that man is not an enemy, I will disgrace father and mother, call myself an Indian, and go hunt with the Siouxs!”

The cloud, as it is about to discharge the subtle lightning, is not more dark nor threatening, than the look with which Ishmael greeted the intruder. He turned his head on every side of him, as if seeking some engine sufficiently terrible to annihilate the offending trapper at a blow; and then, possibly recollecting the further occasion he might have for his counsel, he forced himself to say, with an appearance of moderation that nearly choked him—

“Stranger, I did believe this prying into the concerns of others was the business of women in the towns and settlements, and not the manner in which men, who are used to live where each has room for himself, deal with the secrets of their neighbours. To what lawyer or sheriff do you calculate to sell your news?”

“I hold but little discourse except with one and then chiefly of my own affairs,” returned the old man, without the least observable apprehension, and pointing imposingly upward; “a Judge; and Judge of all. Little does he need knowledge from my hands, and but little will your wish to keep any thing secret from him profit you, even in this desert.”

The mounting tempers of his unnurtured listeners were rebuked by the simple, solemn manner of the trapper. Ishmael stood sullen and thoughtful; while his companion stole a furtive and involuntary glance at the placid sky, which spread so wide and blue above his head, as if he expected to see the Almighty eye itself beaming from the heavenly vault. But impressions of a serious character are seldom lasting on minds long indulged in forgetfulness. The hesitation of the squatter was consequently of short duration. The language, however, as well as the firm and collected air of the speaker, were the means of preventing much subsequent abuse, if not violence.

“It would be showing more of the kindness of a friend and comrade,” Ishmael returned, in a tone sufficiently sullen to betray his humour, though it was no longer threatening, “had your shoulder been put to the wheel of one of yonder wagons, instead of edging itself in here, where none are wanted but such as are invited.”

“I can put the little strength that is left me,” returned the trapper, “to this, as well as to another of your loads.”

“Do you take us for boys!” exclaimed Ishmael, laughing, half in ferocity and half in derision, applying his powerful strength at the same time to the little vehicle, which rolled over the grass with as much seeming facility as if it were drawn by its usual team.

The trapper paused, and followed the departing wagon with his eye, marvelling greatly as to the nature of its concealed contents, until it had also gained the summit of the eminence, and in its turn disappeared behind the swell of the land. Then he turned to gaze at the desolation of the scene around him. The absence of human forms would have scarce created a sensation in the bosom of one so long accustomed to solitude, had not the site of the deserted camp furnished such strong memorials of its recent visitors, and as the old man was quick to detect, of their waste also. He cast his eye upwards, with a shake of the head, at the vacant spot in the heavens which had so lately been filled by the branches of those trees that now lay stripped of their verdure, worthless and deserted logs, at his feet.

“Ay,” he muttered to himself, “I might have know’d it—I might have know’d it! Often have I seen the same before; and yet I brought them to the spot myself, and have now sent them to the only neighbourhood of their kind within many long leagues of the spot where I stand. This is man’s wish, and pride, and waste, and sinfulness! He tames the beasts of the field to feed his idle wants; and, having robbed the brutes of their natural food, he teaches them to strip the ‘arth of its trees to quiet their hunger.”

A rustling in the low bushes which still grew, for some distance, along the swale that formed the thicket on which the camp of Ishmael had rested, caught his ear, at the moment, and cut short the soliloquy. The habits of so many years, spent in the wilderness, caused the old man to bring his rifle to a poise, with something like the activity and promptitude of his youth; but, suddenly recovering his recollection, he dropped it into the hollow of his arm again, and resumed his air of melancholy resignation.

“Come forth, come forth!” he said aloud: “be ye bird, or be ye beast, ye are safe from these old hands. I have eaten and I have drunk: why should I take life, when my wants call for no sacrifice? It will not be long afore the birds will peck at eyes that shall not see them, and perhaps light on my very bones; for if things like these are only made to perish, why am I to expect to live for ever? Come forth, come forth; you are safe from harm at these weak hands.”

“Thank you for the good word, old trapper!” cried Paul Hover, springing actively forward from his place of concealment. “There was an air about you, when you threw forward the muzzle of the piece, that I did not like; for it seemed to say that you were master of all the rest of the motions.”

“You are right, you are right!” cried the trapper, laughing with inward self-complacency at the recollection of his former skill. “The day has been when few men knew the virtues of a long rifle, like this I carry, better than myself, old and useless as I now seem. You are right, young man; and the time was, when it was dangerous to move a leaf within ear-shot of my stand; or,” he added, dropping his voice, and looking serious, “for a Red Mingo to show an eyeball from his ambushment. You have heard of the Red Mingos?”

“I have heard of minks,” said Paul, taking the old man by the arm, and gently urging him towards the thicket as he spoke; while, at the same time, he cast quick and uneasy glances behind him, in order to make sure he was not observed. “Of your common black minks; but none of any other colour.”

“Lord! Lord!” continued the trapper, shaking his head, and still laughing, in his deep but quiet manner; “the boy mistakes a brute for a man! Though, a Mingo is little better than a beast; or, for that matter, he is worse, when rum and opportunity are placed before his eyes. There was that accursed Huron, from the upper lakes, that I knocked from his perch among the rocks in the hills, back of the Hori—”

His voice was lost in the thicket, into which he had suffered himself to be led by Paul while speaking, too much occupied by thoughts which dwelt on scenes and acts that had taken place half a century earlier in the history of the country, to offer the smallest resistance.

## CHAPTER VIII

Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I'll go look on. That  
dissembling abominable varlet, Diomed, has got that same scurvy,  
doting, foolish young knave in his helm.

—Troilus and Cressida.

It is necessary, in order that the thread of the narrative should not be spun to a length which might fatigue the reader, that he should imagine a week to have intervened between the scene with which the preceding chapter closed and the events with which it is our intention to resume its relation in this. The season was on the point of changing its character; the verdure of summer giving place more rapidly to the brown and party-coloured livery of the fall.[\*] The heavens were clothed in driving clouds, piled in vast masses one above the other, which whirled violently in the gusts; opening, occasionally, to admit transient glimpses of the bright and glorious sight of the heavens, dwelling in a magnificence by far too grand and durable to be disturbed by the fitful efforts of the lower world. Beneath, the wind swept across the wild and naked prairies, with a violence that is seldom witnessed in any section of the continent less open. It would have been easy to have imagined, in the ages of fable, that the god of the winds had permitted his subordinate agents to escape from their den, and that they now rioted, in wantonness, across wastes, where neither tree, nor work of man, nor mountain, nor obstacle of any sort, opposed itself to their gambols.

[\*] The Americans call the autumn the "fall," from the fall of the leaf.

Though nakedness might, as usual, be given as the pervading character of the spot, whither it is now necessary to transfer the scene of the tale, it was not entirely without the signs of human life. Amid the monotonous rolling of the prairie, a single naked and ragged rock arose on the margin of a little watercourse, which found its way, after winding a vast distance through the plains, into one of the numerous tributaries of the Father of Rivers. A swale of low land lay near the base of the eminence; and as it was still fringed with a thicket of alders and sumack, it bore the signs of having once nurtured a feeble growth of wood. The trees themselves had been transferred, however, to the summit and crags of the neighbouring rocks. On this elevation the signs of man, to which the allusion just made applies, were to be found.

Seen from beneath, there were visible a breast-work of logs and stones, intermingled in such a manner as to save all unnecessary labour, a few low roofs made of bark and boughs of trees, an occasional barrier, constructed like the defences on the summit, and placed on such points of the acclivity as were easier of approach than the general face of the eminence; and a little dwelling of cloth, perched on the apex of a small pyramid, that shot up on one angle of the rock, the white covering of which glimmered from a distance like a spot of snow, or, to make the simile more suitable to the rest of the subject, like a spotless and carefully guarded standard, which was to be protected by the dearest blood of those who defended the citadel beneath. It is hardly necessary to add, that this rude and characteristic fortress was the place where Ishmael Bush had taken refuge, after the robbery of his flocks and herds.

On the day to which the narrative is advanced, the squatter was standing near the base of the rocks, leaning on his rifle, and regarding the sterile soil that supported him with a look in which contempt and disappointment were strongly blended.

"'Tis time to change our natur's," he observed to the brother of his wife, who was rarely far from his elbow; "and to become ruminators, instead of people used to the fare of Christians and free men. I reckon, Abiram, you could glean a living among the grasshoppers: you ar' an active man, and might outrun the nimblest skipper of them all."

"The country will never do," returned the other, who relished but little the forced humour of his kinsman; "and it is well to remember that a lazy traveller makes a long journey."

"Would you have me draw a cart at my heels, across this desert for weeks,—ay, months?" retorted Ishmael, who, like all of his class, could labour with incredible efforts on emergencies, but who too seldom exerted continued industry, on any occasion, to brook a proposal that offered so little repose. "It may do for your people, who live in settlements, to hasten on to their houses; but, thank Heaven! my farm is too big for its owner ever to want a resting-place."

"Since you like the plantation, then, you have only to make your crop."

"That is easier said than done, on this corner of the estate. I tell you, Abiram, there is need of moving, for more reasons than one. You know I'm a man that very seldom enters into a bargain, but who always fulfils his agreements better than your dealers in wordy contracts written on rags of paper. If there's one mile, there ar' a hundred still needed to make up the distance for which you have my honour."

As he spoke, the squatter glanced his eye upward at the little tenement of cloth which crowned the summit of his ragged fortress. The look was understood and answered by the other; and by some secret influence, which operated either through their interests or feelings, it served to re-establish that harmony between them, which had just been threatened with something like a momentary breach.

"I know it, and feel it in every bone of my body. But I remember the reason, why I have set myself on this accursed journey too well to forget the distance between me and the end. Neither you nor I will ever be the better for what we have done, unless we thoroughly finish what is so well begun. Ay, that is the doctrine of the whole world, I judge: I heard a travelling preacher, who was skirting it down the Ohio, a time since, say, if a man should live up to the faith for a hundred years, and then fall from his work a single day, he would find the settlement was to be made for the finishing blow that he had put to his job, and that all the bad, and none of the good, would come into the final account."

"And you believed the hungry hypocrite!"

"Who said that I believed it?" retorted Abiram with a bullying look, that betrayed how much his fears had dwelt on the subject he

affected to despise. "Is it believing to tell what a roguish—And yet, Ishmael, the man might have been honest after all! He told us that the world was, in truth, no better than a desert, and that there was but one hand that could lead the most learned man through all its crooked windings. Now, if this be true of the whole, it may be true of a part."

"Abiram, out with your grievances like a man," interrupted the squatter, with a hoarse laugh. "You want to pray! But of what use will it be, according to your own doctrine, to serve God five minutes and the devil an hour? Harkee, friend; I'm not much of a husband-man, but this I know to my cost; that to make a right good crop, even on the richest bottom, there must be hard labour; and your snufflers liken the 'arth to a field of corn, and the men, who live on it, to its yield. Now I tell you, Abiram, that you are no better than a thistle or a mullin; yea, ye ar' wood of too open a pore to be good even to burn!"

The malign glance, which shot from the scowling eye of Abiram, announced the angry character of his feelings, but as the furtive look quailed, immediately, before the unmoved, steady, countenance of the squatter, it also betrayed how much the bolder spirit of the latter had obtained the mastery over his craven nature.

Content with his ascendancy, which was too apparent, and had been too often exerted on similar occasions, to leave him in any doubt of its extent, Ishmael coolly continued the discourse, by adverting more directly to his future plans.

"You will own the justice of paying every one in kind," he said; "I have been robbed of my stock, and I have a scheme to make myself as good as before, by taking hoof for hoof; or for that matter, when a man is put to the trouble of bargaining for both sides, he is a fool if he don't pay himself something in the way of commission."

As the squatter made this declaration in a tone which was a little excited by the humour of the moment, four or five of his lounging sons, who had been leaning against the foot of the rock, came forward with the indolent step so common to the family.

"I have been calling Ellen Wade, who is on the rock keeping the look-out, to know if there is any thing to be seen," observed the eldest of the young men; "and she shakes her head, for an answer. Ellen is sparing of her words for a woman; and might be taught manners at least, without spoiling her good looks."

Ishmael cast his eye upward to the place, where the offending, but unconscious girl was holding her anxious watch. She was seated at the edge of the uppermost crag, by the side of the little tent, and at least two hundred feet above the level of the plain. Little else was to be distinguished, at that distance, but the outline of her form, her fair hair streaming in the gusts beyond her shoulders, and the steady and seemingly unchangeable look that she had riveted on some remote point of the prairie.

"What is it, Nell?" cried Ishmael, lifting his powerful voice a little above the rushing of the element. "Have you got a glimpse of any thing bigger than a burrowing barker?"

The lips of the attentive Ellen parted; she rose to the utmost height her small stature admitted, seeming still to regard the unknown object; but her voice, if she spoke at all, was not sufficiently loud to be heard amid the wind.

"It ar' a fact that the child sees something more uncommon than a buffaloe or a prairie dog!" continued Ishmael. "Why, Nell, girl, ar' ye deaf? Nell, I say;—I hope it is an army of red-skins she has in her eye; for I should relish the chance to pay them for their kindness, under the favour of these logs and rocks!"

As the squatter accompanied his vaunt with corresponding gestures, and directed his eyes to the circle of his equally confident sons while speaking, he drew their gaze from Ellen to himself; but now, when they turned together to note the succeeding movements of their female sentinel, the place which had so lately been occupied by her form was vacant.

"As I am a sinner," exclaimed Asa, usually one of the most phlegmatic of the youths, "the girl is blown away by the wind!"

Something like a sensation was exhibited among them, which might have denoted that the influence of the laughing blue eyes, flaxen hair, and glowing cheeks of Ellen, had not been lost on the dull natures of the young men; and looks of amazement, mingled slightly with concern, passed from one to the other as they gazed, in dull wonder, at the point of the naked rock.

"It might well be!" added another; "she sat on a slivered stone, and I have been thinking of telling her she was in danger for more than an hour."

"Is that a riband of the child, dangling from the corner of the hill below?" cried Ishmael; "ha! who is moving about the tent? have I not told you all—"

"Ellen! 'tis Ellen!" interrupted the whole body of his sons in a breath; and at that instant she re-appeared to put an end to their different surmises, and to relieve more than one sluggish nature from its unwonted excitement. As Ellen issued from beneath the folds of the tent, she advanced with a light and fearless step to her former giddy stand, and pointed toward the prairie, appearing to speak in an eager and rapid voice to some invisible auditor.

"Nell is mad!" said Asa, half in contempt and yet not a little in concern. "The girl is dreaming with her eyes open; and thinks she sees some of them fierce creatur's, with hard names, with which the Doctor fills her ears."

"Can it be, the child has found a scout of the Siouxes?" said Ishmael, bending his look toward the plain; but a low, significant whisper from Abiram drew his eyes quickly upward again, where they were turned just in time to perceive that the cloth of the tent was agitated by a motion very evidently different from the quivering occasioned by the wind. "Let her, if she dare!" the squatter muttered in his teeth. "Abiram; they know my temper too well to play the prank with me!"

"Look for yourself! if the curtain is not lifted, I can see no better than the owl by daylight."

Ishmael struck the breach of his rifle violently on the earth, and shouted in a voice that might easily have been heard by Ellen, had not her attention still continued rapt on the object which so unaccountably attracted her eyes in the distance.

"Nell!" continued the squatter, "away with you, fool! will you bring down punishment on your own head? Why, Nell!—she has forgotten her native speech; let us see if she can understand another language."

Ishmael threw his rifle to his shoulder, and at the next moment it was pointed upward at the summit of the rock. Before time was



given for a word of remonstrance, it had sent forth its contents, in its usual streak of bright flame. Ellen started like the frightened chamois, and uttering a piercing scream, she darted into the tent, with a swiftness that left it uncertain whether terror or actual injury had been the penalty of her offence.

The action of the squatter was too sudden and unexpected to admit of prevention, but the instant it was done, his sons manifested, in an unequivocal manner, the temper with which they witnessed the desperate measure. Angry and fierce glances were interchanged, and a murmur of disapprobation was uttered by the whole, in common.

"What has Ellen done, father," said Asa, with a degree of spirit, which was the more striking from being unusual, "that she should be shot at like a straggling deer, or a hungry wolf?"

"Mischief," deliberately returned the squatter; but with a cool expression of defiance in his eye that showed how little he was moved by the ill-concealed humour of his children. "Mischief, boy; mischief! take you heed that the disorder don't spread."

"It would need a different treatment in a man, than in yon screaming girl!"

"Asa, you ar' a man, as you have often boasted; but remember I am your father, and your better."

"I know it well; and what sort of a father?"

"Harkee, boy: I more than half believe that your drowsy head let in the Siouzes. Be modest in speech, my watchful son, or you may have to answer yet for the mischief your own bad conduct has brought upon us."

"I'll stay no longer to be hectored like a child in petticoats. You talk of law, as if you knew of none, and yet you keep me down, as though I had not life and wants of my own. I'll stay no longer to be treated like one of your meanest cattle!"

"The world is wide, my gallant boy, and there's many a noble plantation on it, without a tenant. Go; you have title deeds signed and sealed to your hand. Few fathers portion their children better than Ishmael Bush; you will say that for me, at least, when you get to be a wealthy landholder."

"Look! father, look!" exclaimed several voices at once, seizing with avidity, an opportunity to interrupt a dialogue which threatened to become more violent.

"Look!" repeated Abiram, in a voice which sounded hollow and warning; "if you have time for any thing but quarrels, Ishmael, look!"

The squatter turned slowly from his offending son, and cast an eye, that still lowered with deep resentment upward; but which, the instant it caught a view of the object that now attracted the attention of all around him, changed its expression to one of astonishment and dismay.

A female stood on the spot, from which Ellen had been so fearfully expelled. Her person was of the smallest size that is believed to comport with beauty, and which poets and artists have chosen as the beau ideal of feminine loveliness. Her dress was of a dark and glossy silk, and fluttered like gossamer around her form. Long, flowing, and curling tresses of hair, still blacker and more shining than her robe, fell at times about her shoulders, completely enveloping the whole of her delicate bust in their ringlets; or at others streaming in the wind. The elevation at which she stood prevented a close examination of the lineaments of a countenance which, however, it might be seen was youthful, and, at the moment of her unlooked-for appearance, eloquent with feeling. So young, indeed, did this fair and fragile being appear, that it might be doubted whether the age of childhood was entirely passed. One small and exquisitely moulded hand was pressed on her heart, while with the other she made an impressive gesture, which seemed to invite Ishmael, if further violence was meditated, to direct it against her bosom.

The silent wonder, with which the group of borderers gazed upward at so extraordinary a spectacle, was only interrupted as the person of Ellen was seen emerging with timidity from the tent, as if equally urged, by apprehensions in behalf of herself and the fears which she felt on account of her companion, to remain concealed and to advance. She spoke, but her words were unheard by those below, and unheeded by her to whom they were addressed. The latter, however, as if content with the offer she had made of herself as a victim to the resentment of Ishmael, now calmly retired, and the spot she had so lately occupied became vacant, leaving a sort of stupid impression on the spectators beneath, not unlike that which it might be supposed would have been created had they just been gazing at some supernatural vision.

More than a minute of profound silence succeeded, during which the sons of Ishmael still continued gazing at the naked rock in stupid wonder. Then, as eye met eye, an expression of novel intelligence passed from one to the other, indicating that to them, at least, the appearance of this extraordinary tenant of the pavilion was as unexpected as it was incomprehensible. At length Asa, in right of his years, and moved by the rankling impulse of the recent quarrel, took on himself the office of interrogator. Instead, however, of braving the resentment of his father, of whose fierce nature, when aroused, he had had too frequent evidence to excite it wantonly, he turned upon the cowering person of Abiram, observing with a sneer—

"This then is the beast you were bringing into the prairies for a decoy! I know you to be a man who seldom troubles truth, when any thing worse may answer, but I never knew you to outdo yourself so thoroughly before. The newspapers of Kentuck have called you a dealer in black flesh a hundred times, but little did they reckon that you drove the trade into white families."

"Who is a kidnapper?" demanded Abiram, with a blustering show of resentment. "Am I to be called to account for every lie they put in print throughout the States? Look to your own family, boy; look to yourselves. The very stumps of Kentucky and Tennessee cry out ag'in ye! Ay, my tonguey gentleman, I have seen father and mother and three children, yourself for one, published on the logs and stubs of the settlements, with dollars enough for reward to have made an honest man rich, for—"

He was interrupted by a back-handed but violent blow on the mouth, that caused him to totter, and which left the impression of its weight in the starting blood and swelling lips.

"Asa," said the father, advancing with a portion of that dignity with which the hand of Nature seems to have invested the parental character, "you have struck the brother of your mother!"

"I have struck the abuser of the whole family," returned the angry youth; "and, unless he teaches his tongue a wiser language, he had better part with it altogether, as the unruly member. I'm no great performer with the knife, but, on an occasion, could make out, myself, to cut off a slande—"

"Boy, twice have you forgotten yourself to-day. Be careful that it does not happen the third time. When the law of the land is weak, it is right the law of nature should be strong. You understand me, Asa; and you know me. As for you, Abiram, the child has done you wrong, and it is my place to see you righted. Remember; I tell you justice shall be done; it is enough. But you have said hard things ag'in me and my family. If the hounds of the law have put their bills on the trees and stumps of the clearings, it was for no act of dishonesty as you know, but because we maintain the rule that 'arth is common property. No, Abiram; could I wash my hands of things done by your advice, as easily as I can of the things done by the whisperings of the devil, my sleep would be quieter at night, and none who bear my name need blush to hear it mentioned. Peace, Asa, and you too, man; enough has been said. Let us all think well before any thing is added, that may make what is already so bad still more bitter."

Ishmael waved his hand with authority, as he ended, and turned away with the air of one who felt assured, that those he had addressed would not have the temerity to dispute his commands. Asa evidently struggled with himself to compel the required obedience, but his heavy nature quietly sunk into its ordinary repose, and he soon appeared again the being he really was; dangerous, only, at moments, and one whose passions were too sluggish to be long maintained at the point of ferocity. Not so with Abiram. While there was an appearance of a personal conflict, between him and his colossal nephew, his mien had expressed the infallible evidences of engrossing apprehension, but now, that the authority as well as gigantic strength of the father were interposed between him and his assailant, his countenance changed from paleness to a livid hue, that bespoke how deeply the injury he had received rankled in his breast. Like Asa, however, he acquiesced in the decision of the squatter; and the appearance, at least, of harmony was restored again among a set of beings, who were restrained by no obligations more powerful than the frail web of authority with which Ishmael had been able to envelope his children.

One effect of the quarrel had been to divert the thoughts of the young men from their recent visitor. With the dispute, that succeeded the disappearance of the fair stranger, all recollection of her existence appeared to have vanished. A few ominous and secret conferences, it is true, were held apart, during which the direction of the eyes of the different speakers betrayed their subject; but these threatening symptoms soon disappeared, and the whole party was again seen broken into its usual, listless, silent, and lounging groups.

"I will go upon the rock, boys, and look abroad for the savages," said Ishmael shortly after, advancing towards them with a mien which he intended should be conciliating, at the same time that it was authoritative.

"If there is nothing to fear, we will go out on the plain; the day is too good to be lost in words, like women in the towns wrangling over their tea and sugared cakes."

Without waiting for approbation or dissent, the squatter advanced to the base of the rock, which formed a sort of perpendicular wall, nearly twenty feet high around the whole acclivity. Ishmael, however, directed his footsteps to a point where an ascent might be made through a narrow cleft, which he had taken the precaution to fortify with a breast-work of cottonwood logs, and which, in its turn, was defended by a chevaux-de-frise of the branches of the same tree. Here an armed man was usually kept, as at the key of the whole position, and here one of the young men now stood, indolently leaning against the rock, ready to protect the pass, if it should prove necessary, until the whole party could be mustered at the several points of defence.

From this place the squatter found the ascent still difficult, partly by nature and partly by artificial impediments, until he reached a sort of terrace, or, to speak more properly, the plain of the elevation, where he had established the huts in which the whole family dwelt. These tenements were, as already mentioned, of that class which are so often seen on the borders, and such as belonged to the infancy of architecture; being simply formed of logs, bark, and poles. The area on which they stood contained several hundred square feet, and was sufficiently elevated above the plain greatly to lessen if not to remove all danger from Indian missiles. Here Ishmael believed he might leave his infants in comparative security, under the protection of their spirited mother, and here he now found Esther engaged at her ordinary domestic employments, surrounded by her daughters, and lifting her voice, in declamatory censure, as one or another of the idle fry incurred her displeasure, and far too much engrossed with the tempest of her own conversation to know any thing of the violent scene which had been passing below.

"A fine windy place you have chosen for the camp, Ishmael!" she commenced, or rather continued, by merely diverting the attack from a sobbing girl of ten, at her elbow, to her husband. "My word! if I haven't to count the young ones every ten minutes, to see they are not flying away among the buzzards, or the ducks. Why do ye all keep hovering round the rock, like lolloping reptiles in the spring, when the heavens are beginning to be alive with birds, man. D'ye think mouths can be filled, and hunger satisfied, by laziness and sleep!"

"You'll have your say, Eester," said the husband, using the provincial pronunciation of America for the name, and regarding his noisy companions, with a look of habitual tolerance rather than of affection. "But the birds you shall have, if your own tongue don't frighten them to take too high a flight. Ay, woman," he continued, standing on the very spot whence he had so rudely banished Ellen, which he had by this time gained, "and buffaloe too, if my eye can tell the animal at the distance of a Spanish league."

"Come down; come down, and be doing, instead of talking. A talking man is no better than a barking dog. I shall hang out the cloth, if any of the red-skins show themselves, in time to give you notice. But, Ishmael, what have you been killing, my man; for it was your rifle I heard a few minutes ago, unless I have lost my skill in sounds."

"Poh! 'twas to frighten the hawk you see sailing above the rock."

"Hawk, indeed! at your time of day to be shooting at hawks and buzzards, with eighteen open mouths to feed. Look at the bee, and at the beaver, my good man, and learn to be a provider. Why, Ishmael! I believe my soul," she continued, dropping the tow she was twisting on a distaff, "the man is in that tent ag'in! More than half his time is spent about the worthless, good-for-nothing—"

The sudden re-appearance of her husband closed the mouth of the wife; and, as the former descended to the place where Esther had

resumed her employment, she was content to grumble forth her dissatisfaction, instead of expressing it in more audible terms.

The dialogue that now took place between the affectionate pair was sufficiently succinct and expressive. The woman was at first a little brief and sullen in her answers, but care for her family soon rendered her more complaisant. As the purport of the conversation was merely an engagement to hunt during the remainder of the day, in order to provide the chief necessary of life, we shall not stop to record it.

With this resolution, then, the squatter descended to the plain and divided his forces into two parts, one of which was to remain as a guard with the fortress, and the other to accompany him to the field. He warily included Asa and Abiram in his own party, well knowing that no authority short of his own was competent to repress the fierce disposition of his headlong son, if fairly awakened. When these arrangements were completed, the hunters sallied forth, separating at no great distance from the rock, in order to form a circle about the distant herd of buffaloes.

## CHAPTER IX

Priscian a little scratch'd;  
'Twill serve.  
—Love's Labour Lost.

Having made the reader acquainted with the manner in which Ishmael Bush had disposed of his family, under circumstances that might have proved so embarrassing to most other men, we shall again shift the scene a few short miles from the place last described, preserving, however, the due and natural succession of time. At the very moment that the squatter and his sons departed in the manner mentioned in the preceding chapter, two men were intently occupied in a swale that lay along the borders of a little run, just out of cannon-shot from the encampment, discussing the merits of a savoury bison's hump, that had been prepared for their palates with the utmost attention to the particular merits of that description of food. The choice morsel had been judiciously separated from the adjoining and less worthy parts of the beast, and, enveloped in the hairy coating provided by nature, it had duly undergone the heat of the customary subterraneous oven, and was now laid before its proprietors in all the culinary glory of the prairies. So far as richness, delicacy, and wildness of flavour, and substantial nourishment were concerned, the viand might well have claimed a decided superiority over the meretricious cookery and laboured compounds of the most renowned artist; though the service of the dainty was certainly achieved in a manner far from artificial. It would appear that the two fortunate mortals, to whose happy lot it fell to enjoy a meal in which health and appetite lent so keen a relish to the exquisite food of the American deserts, were far from being insensible of the advantage they possessed.

The one, to whose knowledge in the culinary art the other was indebted for his banquet, seemed the least disposed of the two to profit by his own skill. He ate, it is true, and with a relish; but it was always with the moderation with which age is apt to temper the appetite. No such restraint, however, was imposed on the inclination of his companion. In the very flower of his days and in the vigour of manhood, the homage that he paid to the work of his more aged friend's hands was of the most profound and engrossing character. As one delicious morsel succeeded another he rolled his eyes towards his companion, and seemed to express that gratitude which he had not speech to utter, in looks of the most benignant nature.

"Cut more into the heart of it, lad," said the trapper, for it was the venerable inhabitant of those vast wastes, who had served the bee-hunter with the banquet in question; "cut more into the centre of the piece; there you will find the genuine riches of nature; and that without need from spices, or any of your biting mustard to give it a foreign relish."

"If I had but a cup of metheglin," said Paul, stopping to perform the necessary operation of breathing, "I should swear this was the strongest meal that was ever placed before the mouth of man!"

"Ay, ay, well you may call it strong!" returned the other, laughing after his peculiar manner, in pure satisfaction at witnessing the infinite contentment of his companion; "strong it is, and strong it makes him who eats it! Here, Hector," tossing the patient hound, who was watching his eye with a wistful look, a portion of the meat, "you have need of strength, my friend, in your old days as well as your master. Now, lad, there is a dog that has eaten and slept wiser and better, ay, and that of richer food, than any king of them all! and why? because he has used and not abused the gifts of his Maker. He was made a hound, and like a hound has he feasted. Then did He create men; but they have eaten like famished wolves! A good and prudent dog has Hector proved, and never have I found one of his breed false in nose or friendship. Do you know the difference between the cookery of the wilderness and that which is found in the settlements? No; I see plainly you don't, by your appetite; then I will tell you. The one follows man, the other nature. One thinks he can add to the gifts of the Creator, while the other is humble enough to enjoy them; therein lies the secret."

"I tell you, trapper," said Paul, who was very little edified by the morality with which his associate saw fit to season their repast, "that, every day while we are in this place, and they are likely to be many, I will shoot a buffaloe and you shall cook his hump!"

"I cannot say that, I cannot say that. The beast is good, take him in what part you will, and it was to be food for man that he was fashioned; but I cannot say that I will be a witness and a helper to the waste of killing one daily."

"The devil a bit of waste shall there be, old man. If they all turn out as good as this, I will engage to eat them clean myself, even to the hoofs;—how now, who comes here! some one with a long nose, I will answer; and one that has led him on a true scent, if he is following the trail of a dinner."

The individual who interrupted the conversation, and who had elicited the foregoing remark of Paul, was seen advancing along the margin of the run with a deliberate pace, in a direct line for the two revellers. As there was nothing formidable nor hostile in his appearance, the bee-hunter, instead of suspending his operations, rather increased his efforts, in a manner which would seem to imply that he doubted whether the hump would suffice for the proper entertainment of all who were now likely to partake of the delicious morsel. With the trapper, however, the case was different. His more tempered appetite was already satisfied, and he faced the new comer with a look of cordiality, that plainly evinced how very opportune he considered his arrival.

"Come on, friend," he said, waving his hand, as he observed the stranger to pause a moment, apparently in doubt. "Come on, I say, if hunger be your guide, it has led you to a fitting place. Here is meat, and this youth can give you corn, parch'd till it be whiter than the upland snow; come on, without fear. We are not ravenous beasts, eating of each other, but Christian men, receiving thankfully that which the Lord hath seen fit to give."

"Venerable hunter," returned the Doctor, for it was no other than the naturalist on one of his daily exploring expeditions, "I rejoice greatly at this happy meeting; we are lovers of the same pursuits, and should be friends."

"Lord, Lord!" said the old man, laughing, without much deference to the rules of decorum, in the philosopher's very face, "it is the

man who wanted to make me believe that a name could change the natur' of a beast! Come, friend; you are welcome, though your notions are a little blinded with reading too many books. Sit ye down, and, after eating of this morsel, tell me, if you can, the name of the creatur' that has bestowed on you its flesh for a meal?"

The eyes of Doctor Battius (for we deem it decorous to give the good man the appellation he most preferred) sufficiently denoted the satisfaction with which he listened to this proposal. The exercise he had taken, and the sharpness of the wind, proved excellent stimulants; and Paul himself had hardly been in better plight to do credit to the trapper's cookery, than was the lover of nature, when the grateful invitation met his ears. Indulging in a small laugh, which his exertions to repress reduced nearly to a simper, he took the indicated seat by the old man's side, and made the customary dispositions to commence his meal without further ceremony.

"I should be ashamed of my profession," he said, swallowing a morsel of the hump with evident delight, slyly endeavouring at the same time to distinguish the peculiarities of the singed and defaced skin, "I ought to be ashamed of my profession, were there beast, or bird, on the continent of America, that I could not tell by some one of the many evidences which science has enlisted in her cause. This—then—the food is nutritious and savoury—a mouthful of your corn, friend, if you please?"

Paul, who continued eating with increasing industry, looking askant not unlike a dog when engaged in the same agreeable pursuit, threw him his pouch, without deeming it at all necessary to suspend his own labours.

"You were saying, friend, that you have many ways of telling the creatur'?"—observed the attentive trapper.

"Many; many and infallible. Now, the animals that are carnivorous are known by their incisores."

"Their what?" demanded the trapper.

"The teeth with which nature has furnished them for defence, and in order to tear their food. Again—"

"Look you then for the teeth of this creatur'," interrupted the trapper, who was bent on convincing a man who had presumed to enter into competition with himself, in matters pertaining to the wilds, of gross ignorance; "turn the piece round and find your inside-overs."

The Doctor complied, and of course without success; though he profited by the occasion to take another fruitless glance at the wrinkled hide.

"Well, friend, do you find the things you need, before you can pronounce the creatur' a duck or a salmon?"

"I apprehend the entire animal is not here?"

"You may well say as much," cried Paul, who was now compelled to pause from pure repletion; "I will answer for some pounds of the fellow, weighed by the truest steel-yards west of the Alleghanies. Still you may make out to keep soul and body together, with what is left," reluctantly eyeing a piece large enough to feed twenty men, but which he felt compelled to abandon from satiety; "cut in nigher to the heart, as the old man says, and you will find the riches of the piece."

"The heart!" exclaimed the Doctor, inwardly delighted to learn there was a distinct organ to be submitted to his inspection. "Ay, let me see the heart—it will at once determine the character of the animal—certes this is not the cor—ay, sure enough it is—the animal must be of the order belluae, from its obese habits!"

He was interrupted by a long and hearty, but still a noiseless fit of merriment, from the trapper, which was considered so ill-timed by the offended naturalist, as to produce an instant cessation of speech, if not a stagnation of ideas.

"Listen to his beasts' habits and belly orders," said the old man, delighted with the evident embarrassment of his rival; "and then he says it is not the core! Why, man, you are farther from the truth than you are from the settlements, with all your bookish larning and hard words; which I have, once for all, said cannot be understood by any tribe or nation east of the Rocky Mountains. Beastly habits or no beastly habits, the creatur's are to be seen cropping the prairies by tens of thousands, and the piece in your hand is the core of as juicy a buffaloe-hump as stomach need crave!"

"My aged companion," said Obed, struggling to keep down a rising irascibility, that he conceived would ill comport with the dignity of his character, "your system is erroneous, from the premises to the conclusion; and your classification so faulty, as utterly to confound the distinctions of science. The buffaloe is not gifted with a hump at all; nor is his flesh savoury and wholesome, as I must acknowledge it would seem the subject before us may well be characterised—"

"There I'm dead against you, and clearly with the trapper," interrupted Paul Hover. "The man who denies that buffaloe beef is good, should scorn to eat it!"[\*]

[\*] It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader, that the animal so often alluded to in this book, and which is vulgarly called the buffaloe, is in truth the bison; hence so many contretemps between the men of the prairies and the men of science.

The Doctor, whose observation of the bee-hunter had hitherto been exceedingly cursory, stared at the new speaker with a look which denoted something like recognition.

"The principal characteristics of your countenance, friend," he said, "are familiar; either you, or some other specimen of your class, is known to me."

"I am the man you met in the woods east of the big river, and whom you tried to persuade to line a yellow hornet to his nest: as if my eye was not too true to mistake any other animal for a honey-bee, in a clear day! We tarried together a week, as you may remember; you at your toads and lizards, and I at my high-holes and hollow trees: and a good job we made of it between us! I filled my tubs with the sweetest honey I ever sent to the settlements, besides housing a dozen hives; and your bag was near bursting with a crawling museum. I never was bold enough to put the question to your face, stranger, but I reckon you are a keeper of curiosities?"[\*]

[\*] The pursuit of a bee-hunter is not uncommon, on the skirts of American society, though it is a little embellished here. When the bees are seen sucking the flowers, their pursuer contrives to capture one or two. He then chooses a proper spot, and suffering one to escape, the insect invariably takes its flight towards the hive. Changing his ground to a greater or less distance according

to circumstances, the bee-hunter then permits another to escape. Having watched the courses of the bees, which is technically called lining, he is enabled to calculate the intersecting angle of the two lines, which is the hive.

"Ay! that is another of their wanton wickednesses!" exclaimed the trapper. "They slay the buck, and the moose, and the wild cat, and all the beasts that range the woods, and stuffing them with worthless rags, and placing eyes of glass into their heads, they set them up to be stared at, and call them the creatur's of the Lord; as if any mortal effigy could equal the works of his hand!"

"I know you well," returned the Doctor, on whom the plaint of the old man produced no visible impression. "I know you," offering his hand cordially to Paul; "it was a prolific week, as my herbal and catalogues shall one day prove. Ay, I remember you well, young man. You are of the class, mammalia; order, primates; genus, homo; species, Kentucky." Pausing to smile at his own humour, the naturalist proceeded. "Since our separation, I have journeyed far, having entered into a compactum or agreement with a certain man named Ishmael—"

"Bush!" interrupted the impatient and reckless Paul. "By the Lord, trapper, this is the very blood-letter that Ellen told me of!"

"Then Nelly has not done me credit for what I trust I deserve," returned the single-minded Doctor, "for I am not of the phlebotomising school at all; greatly preferring the practice which purifies the blood instead of abstracting it."

"It was a blunder of mine, good stranger; the girl called you a skilful man."

"Therein she may have exceeded my merits," Dr. Battius continued, bowing with sufficient meekness. "But Ellen is a good, and a kind, and a spirited girl, too. A kind and a sweet girl I have ever found Nell Wade to be!"

"The devil you have!" cried Paul, dropping the morsel he was sucking, from sheer reluctance to abandon the hump, and casting a fierce and direct look into the very teeth of the unconscious physician. "I reckon, stranger, you have a mind to bag Ellen, too!"

"The riches of the whole vegetable and animal world united, would not tempt me to harm a hair of her head! I love the child, with what may be called amor naturalis—or rather paternus—the affection of a father."

"Ay—that, indeed, is more befitting the difference in your years," Paul coolly rejoined, stretching forth his hand to regain the rejected morsel. "You would be no better than a drone at your time of day, with a young hive to feed and swarm."

"Yes, there is reason, because there is natur', in what he says," observed the trapper: "but, friend, you have said you were a dweller in the camp of one Ishmael Bush?"

"True; it is in virtue of a compactum—"

"I know but little of the virtue of packing, though I follow trapping, in my old age, for a livelihood. They tell me that skins are well kept in the new fashion; but it is long since I have left off killing more than I need for food and garments. I was an eye-witness, myself, of the manner in which the Siouzes broke into your encampment, and drove off the cattle; stripping the poor man you call Ishmael of his smallest hoofs, counting even the cloven feet."

"Asinus excepted," muttered the Doctor, who by this time was discussing his portion of the hump, in utter forgetfulness of all its scientific attributes. "Asinus domesticus Americanus excepted."

"I am glad to hear that so many of them are saved, though I know not the value of the animals you name; which is nothing uncommon, seeing how long it is that I have been out of the settlements. But can you tell me, friend, what the traveller carries under the white cloth, he guards with teeth as sharp as a wolf that quarrels for the carcass the hunter has left?"

"You've heard of it!" exclaimed the other, dropping the morsel he was conveying to his mouth in manifest surprise.

"Nay, I have heard nothing; but I have seen the cloth, and had like to have been bitten for no greater crime than wishing to know what it covered."

"Bitten! then, after all, the animal must be carnivorous! It is too tranquil for the ursus horridus; if it were the canis latrans, the voice would betray it. Nor would Nelly Wade be so familiar with any of the genus ferae. Venerable hunter! the solitary animal confined in that wagon by day, and in the tent at night, has occasioned me more perplexity of mind than the whole catalogue of quadrupeds besides: and for this plain reason; I did not know how to class it."

"You think it a ravenous beast?"

"I know it to be a quadruped: your own danger proves it to be carnivorous."

During this broken explanation, Paul Hover had sat silent and thoughtful, regarding each speaker with deep attention. But, suddenly moved by the manner of the Doctor, the latter had scarcely time to utter his positive assertion, before the young man bluntly demanded

"And pray, friend, what may you call a quadruped?"

"A vagary of nature, wherein she has displayed less of her infinite wisdom than is usual. Could rotary levers be substituted for two of the limbs, agreeably to the improvement in my new order of phalangacrura, which might be rendered into the vernacular as lever-legged, there would be a delightful perfection and harmony in the construction. But, as the quadruped is now formed, I call it a mere vagary of nature; no other than a vagary."

"Harkee, stranger! in Kentucky we are but small dealers in dictionaries. Vagary is as hard a word to turn into English as quadruped."

"A quadruped is an animal with four legs—a beast."

"A beast! Do you then reckon that Ishmael Bush travels with a beast caged in that wagon?"

"I know it, and lend me your ear—not literally, friend," observing Paul to start and look surprised, "but figuratively, through its functions, and you shall hear. I have already made known that, in virtue of a compactum, I journey with the aforesaid Ishmael Bush; but though I am bound to perform certain duties while the journey lasts, there is no condition which says that the said journey shall be sempiternum, or eternal. Now, though this region may scarcely be said to be wedded to science, being to all intents a virgin territory as

respects the enquirer into natural history, still it is greatly destitute of the treasures of the vegetable kingdom. I should, therefore, have tarried some hundreds of miles more to the eastward, were it not for the inward propensity that I feel to have the beast in question inspected and suitably described and classed. For that matter," he continued, dropping his voice, like one who imparts an important secret, "I am not without hopes of persuading Ishmael to let me dissect it."

"You have seen the creature?"

"Not with the organs of sight; but with much more infallible instruments of vision: the conclusions of reason, and the deductions of scientific premises. I have watched the habits of the animal, young man; and can fearlessly pronounce, by evidence that would be thrown away on ordinary observers, that it is of vast dimensions, inactive, possibly torpid, of voracious appetite, and, as it now appears by the direct testimony of this venerable hunter, ferocious and carnivorous!"

"I should be better pleased, stranger," said Paul, on whom the Doctor's description was making a very sensible impression, "to be sure the creature was a beast at all."

"As to that, if I wanted evidence of a fact, which is abundantly apparent by the habits of the animal, I have the word of Ishmael himself. A reason can be given for my smallest deductions. I am not troubled, young man, with a vulgar and idle curiosity, but all my aspirations after knowledge, as I humbly believe, are, first, for the advancement of learning, and, secondly, for the benefit of my fellow-creatures. I pined greatly in secret to know the contents of the tent, which Ishmael guarded so carefully, and which he had covenanted that I should swear, (*jurare per deos*) not to approach nigher than a defined number of cubits, for a definite period of time. Your *jusjurandum*, or oath, is a serious matter, and not to be dealt in lightly; but, as my expedition depended on complying, I consented to the act, reserving to myself at all times the power of distant observation. It is now some ten days since Ishmael, pitying the state in which he saw me, a humble lover of science, imparted the fact that the vehicle contained a beast, which he was carrying into the prairies as a decoy, by which he intends to entrap others of the same genus, or perhaps species. Since then, my task has been reduced simply to watch the habits of the animal, and to record the results. When we reach a certain distance where these beasts are said to abound, I am to have the liberal examination of the specimen."

Paul continued to listen, in the most profound silence, until the Doctor concluded his singular but characteristic explanation; then the incredulous bee-hunter shook his head, and saw fit to reply, by saying—

"Stranger, old Ishmael has burrowed you in the very bottom of a hollow tree, where your eyes will be of no more use than the sting of a drone. I, too, know something of that very wagon, and I may say that I have lined the squatter down into a flat lie. Harkee, friend; do you think a girl, like Ellen Wade, would become the companion of a wild beast?"

"Why not? why not?" repeated the naturalist; "Nelly has a taste, and often listens with pleasure to the treasures that I am sometimes compelled to scatter in this desert. Why should she not study the habits of any animal, even though it were a rhinoceros?"

"Softly, softly," returned the equally positive, and, though less scientific, certainly, on this subject, better instructed bee-hunter; "Ellen is a girl of spirit, and one too that knows her own mind, or I'm much mistaken; but with all her courage and brave looks, she is no better than a woman after all. Haven't I often had the girl crying—"

"You are an acquaintance, then, of Nelly's?"

"The devil a bit. But I know woman is woman; and all the books in Kentucky couldn't make Ellen Wade go into a tent alone with a ravenous beast!"

"It seems to me," the trapper calmly observed, "that there is something dark and hidden in this matter. I am a witness that the traveller likes none to look into the tent, and I have a proof more sure than what either of you can lay claim to, that the wagon does not carry the cage of a beast. Here is Hector, come of a breed with noses as true and faithful as a hand that is all-powerful has made any of their kind, and had there been a beast in the place, the hound would long since have told it to his master."

"Do you pretend to oppose a dog to a man! brutality to learning! instinct to reason!" exclaimed the Doctor in some heat. "In what manner, pray, can a hound distinguish the habits, species, or even the genus of an animal, like reasoning, learned, scientific, triumphant man!"

"In what manner!" coolly repeated the veteran woodsman. "Listen; and if you believe that a schoolmaster can make a quicker wit than the Lord, you shall be made to see how much you're mistaken. Do you not hear something move in the brake? it has been cracking the twigs these five minutes. Now tell me what the creatur' is?"

"I hope nothing ferocious!" exclaimed the Doctor, who still retained a lively impression of his rencounter with the *vespertilio horribilis*. "You have rifles, friends; would it not be prudent to prime them? for this fowling piece of mine is little to be depended on."

"There may be reason in what he says," returned the trapper, so far complying as to take his piece from the place where it had lain during the repast, and raising its muzzle in the air. "Now tell me the name of the creatur'?"

"It exceeds the limits of earthly knowledge! Buffon himself could not tell whether the animal was a quadruped, or of the order, *serpens*! a sheep, or a tiger!"

"Then was your buffoon a fool to my Hector! Here: pup!—What is it, dog?—Shall we run it down, pup—or shall we let it pass?"

The hound, which had already manifested to the experienced trapper, by the tremulous motion of his ears, his consciousness of the proximity of a strange animal, lifted his head from his fore paws and slightly parted his lips, as if about to show the remnants of his teeth. But, suddenly abandoning his hostile purpose, he snuffed the air a moment, gaped heavily, shook himself, and peaceably resumed his recumbent attitude.

"Now, Doctor," cried the trapper, triumphantly, "I am well convinced there is neither game nor ravenous beast in the thicket; and that I call substantial knowledge to a man who is too old to be a spendthrift of his strength, and yet who would not wish to be a meal for a panther!"

The dog interrupted his master by a growl, but still kept his head crouched to the earth.

“It is a man!” exclaimed the trapper, rising. “It is a man, if I am a judge of the creature’s ways. There is but little said atwixt the hound and me, but we seldom mistake each other’s meaning!”

Paul Hover sprang to his feet like lightning; and, throwing forward his rifle, he cried in a voice of menace—

“Come forward, if a friend; if an enemy, stand ready for the worst!”

“A friend, a white man, and, I hope, a Christian,” returned a voice from the thicket; which opened at the same instant, and at the next the speaker made his appearance.



## CHAPTER X

Go apart, Adam, and thou shalt hear  
How he will shake me up.

—As you like it.

It is well known, that even long before the immense regions of Louisiana changed their masters for the second, and, as it is to be hoped, for the last time, its unguarded territory was by no means safe from the inroads of white adventurers. The semi-barbarous hunters from the Canadas, the same description of population, a little more enlightened, from the States, and the metiffs or half-breeds, who claimed to be ranked in the class of white men, were scattered among the different Indian tribes, or gleaned a scanty livelihood in solitude, amid the haunts of the beaver and the bison; or, to adopt the popular nomenclature of the country of the buffaloe.[\*]

[\*] In addition to the scientific distinctions which mark the two species, it may be added, with due deference to Dr. Battius, that a much more important particular is the fact, that while the former of these animals is delicious and nourishing food, the latter is scarcely edible.

It was, therefore, no unusual thing for strangers to encounter each other in the endless wastes of the west. By signs, which an unpractised eye would pass unobserved, these borderers knew when one of his fellows was in his vicinity, and he avoided or approached the intruder as best comported with his feelings or his interests. Generally, these interviews were pacific; for the whites had a common enemy to dread, in the ancient and perhaps more lawful occupants of the country; but instances were not rare, in which jealousy and cupidity had caused them to terminate in scenes of the most violent and ruthless treachery. The meeting of two hunters on the American desert, as we find it convenient sometimes to call this region, was consequently somewhat in the suspicious and wary manner in which two vessels draw together in a sea that is known to be infested with pirates. While neither party is willing to betray its weakness, by exhibiting distrust, neither is disposed to commit itself by any acts of confidence, from which it may be difficult to recede.

Such was, in some degree, the character of the present interview. The stranger drew nigh deliberately; keeping his eyes steadily fastened on the movements of the other party, while he purposely created little difficulties to impede an approach which might prove too hasty. On the other hand, Paul stood playing with the lock of his rifle, too proud to let it appear that three men could manifest any apprehension of a solitary individual, and yet too prudent to omit, entirely, the customary precautions. The principal reason of the marked difference which the two legitimate proprietors of the banquet made in the receptions of their guests, was to be explained by the entire difference which existed in their respective appearances.

While the exterior of the naturalist was decidedly pacific, not to say abstracted, that of the new comer was distinguished by an air of vigour, and a front and step which it would not have been difficult to have at once pronounced to be military.

He wore a forage-cap of fine blue cloth, from which depended a soiled tassel in gold, and which was nearly buried in a mass of exuberant, curling, jet-black hair. Around his throat he had negligently fastened a stock of black silk. His body was enveloped in a hunting-shirt of dark green, trimmed with the yellow fringes and ornaments that were sometimes seen among the border-troops of the Confederacy. Beneath this, however, were visible the collar and lapels of a jacket, similar in colour and cloth to the cap. His lower limbs were protected by buckskin leggings, and his feet by the ordinary Indian moccasins. A richly ornamented, and exceedingly dangerous straight dirk was stuck in a sash of red silk net-work; another girdle, or rather belt, of uncoloured leather contained a pair of the smallest sized pistols, in holsters nicely made to fit, and across his shoulder was thrown a short, heavy, military rifle; its horn and pouch occupying the usual places beneath his arms. At his back he bore a knapsack, marked by the well known initials that have since gained for the government of the United States the good-humoured and quaint appellation of Uncle Sam.

“I come in amity,” the stranger said, like one too much accustomed to the sight of arms to be startled at the ludicrously belligerent attitude which Dr. Battius had seen fit to assume. “I come as a friend; and am one whose pursuits and wishes will not at all interfere with your own.”

“Harkee, stranger,” said Paul Hover, bluntly; “do you understand lining a bee from this open place into a wood, distant, perhaps, a dozen miles?”

“The bee is a bird I have never been compelled to seek,” returned the other, laughing; “though I have, too, been something of a fowler in my time.”

“I thought as much,” exclaimed Paul, thrusting forth his hand frankly, and with the true freedom of manner that marks an American borderer. “Let us cross fingers. You and I will never quarrel about the comb, since you set so little store by the honey. And now, if your stomach has an empty corner, and you know how to relish a genuine dew-drop when it falls into your very mouth, there lies the exact morsel to put into it. Try it, stranger; and having tried it, if you don't call it as snug a fit as you have made since—How long ar' you from the settlements, pray?”

“’Tis many weeks, and I fear it may be as many more before I can return. I will, however, gladly profit by your invitation, for I have fasted since the rising of yesterday's sun, and I know too well the merits of a bison's bump to reject the food.”

“Ah! you ar' acquainted with the dish! Well, therein you have the advantage of me, in setting out, though I think I may say we could now start on equal ground. I should be the happiest fellow between Kentucky and the Rocky Mountains, if I had a snug cabin, near some old wood that was filled with hollow trees, just such a hump every day as that for dinner, a load of fresh straw for hives, and little El—”

“Little what?” demanded the stranger, evidently amused with the communicative and frank disposition of the bee-hunter.

"Something that I shall have one day, and which concerns nobody so much as myself," returned Paul, picking the flint of his rifle, and beginning very cavalierly to whistle an air well known on the waters of the Mississippi.

During this preliminary discourse the stranger had taken his seat by the side of the hump, and was already making a serious inroad on its relics. Dr. Battius, however, watched his movements with a jealousy, still more striking than the cordial reception which the open-hearted Paul had just exhibited.

But the doubts, or rather apprehensions, of the naturalist were of a character altogether different from the confidence of the bee-hunter. He had been struck with the stranger's using the legitimate, instead of the perverted name of the animal off which he was making his repast; and as he had been among the foremost himself to profit by the removal of the impediments which the policy of Spain had placed in the way of all explorers of her trans-Atlantic dominions, whether bent on the purposes of commerce, or, like himself, on the more laudable pursuits of science, he had a sufficiency of every-day philosophy to feel that the same motives, which had so powerfully urged himself to his present undertaking, might produce a like result on the mind of some other student of nature. Here, then, was the prospect of an alarming rivalry, which bade fair to strip him of at least a moiety of the just rewards of all his labours, privations, and dangers. Under these views of his character, therefore, it is not at all surprising that the native meekness of the naturalist's disposition was a little disturbed, and that he watched the proceedings of the other with such a degree of vigilance as he believed best suited to detect his sinister designs.

"This is truly a delicious repast," observed the unconscious young stranger, for both young and handsome he was fairly entitled to be considered; "either hunger has given a peculiar relish to the viand, or the bison may lay claim to be the finest of the ox family!"

"Naturalists, sir, are apt, when they speak familiarly, to give the cow the credit of the genus," said Dr. Battius, swelling with secret distrust, and clearing his throat, before speaking, much in the manner that a duellist examines the point of the weapon he is about to plunge into the body of his foe. "The figure is more perfect; as the bos, meaning the ox, is unable to perpetuate his kind; and the bos, in its most extended meaning, or vacca, is altogether the nobler animal of the two."

The Doctor uttered this opinion with a certain air, that he intended should express his readiness to come at once, to any of the numerous points of difference which he doubted not existed between them; and he now awaited the blow of his antagonist, intending that his next thrust should be still more vigorous. But the young stranger appeared much better disposed to partake of the good cheer, with which he had been so providentially provided, than to take up the cudgels of argument on this, or on any other of the knotty points which are so apt to furnish the lovers of science with the materials of a mental joust.

"I dare say you are very right, sir," he replied, with a most provoking indifference to the importance of the points he conceded. "I dare say you are quite right; and that vacca would have been the better word."

"Pardon me, sir; you are giving a very wrong construction to my language, if you suppose I include, without many and particular qualifications, the bibulus Americanus, in the family of the vacca. For, as you well know, sir—or, as I presume I should say, Doctor; you have the medical diploma, no doubt?"

"You give me credit for an honour I cannot claim," interrupted the other.

"An under-graduate!—or perhaps your degrees have been taken in some other of the liberal sciences?"

"Still wrong, I do assure you."

"Surely, young man, you have not entered on this important—I may say, this awful service, without some evidence of your fitness for the task! Some commission by which you can assert an authority to proceed, or by which you may claim an affinity and a communion with your fellow-workers in the same beneficent pursuits!"

"I know not by what means, or for what purposes, you have made yourself master of my objects!" exclaimed the youth, reddening and rising with a quickness which manifested how little he regarded the grosser appetites, when a subject nearer his heart was approached. "Still, sir, your language is incomprehensible. That pursuit, which in another might perhaps be justly called beneficent, is, in me, a dear and cherished duty; though why a commission should be demanded or needed is, I confess, no less a subject of surprise."

"It is customary to be provided with such a document," returned the Doctor, gravely; "and, on all suitable occasions to produce it, in order that congenial and friendly minds may, at once, reject unworthy suspicions, and stepping over, what may be called the elements of discourse, come at once to those points which are desiderata to both."

"It is a strange request!" the youth muttered, turning his frowning eye from one to the other, as if examining the characters of his companions, with a view to weigh their physical powers. Then, putting his hand into his bosom, he drew forth a small box, and extending it with an air of dignity towards the Doctor, he continued—"You will find by this, sir, that I have some right to travel in a country which is now the property of the American States."

"What have we here!" exclaimed the naturalist, opening the folds of a large parchment. "Why, this is the sign-manual of the philosopher, Jefferson! The seal of state! Countersigned by the minister of war! Why this is a commission creating Duncan Uncas Middleton a captain of artillery!"

"Of whom? of whom?" repeated the trapper, who had sat regarding the stranger, during the whole discourse, with eyes that seemed greedily to devour each lineament. "How is the name? did you call him Uncas?—Uncas! Was it Uncas?"

"Such is my name," returned the youth, a little haughtily. "It is the appellation of a native chief, that both my uncle and myself bear with pride; for it is the memorial of an important service done my family by a warrior in the old wars of the provinces."

"Uncas! did ye call him Uncas?" repeated the trapper, approaching the youth and parting the dark curls which clustered over his brow, without the slightest resistance on the part of their wondering owner. "Ah my eyes are old, and not so keen as when I was a warrior myself; but I can see the look of the father in the son! I saw it when he first came nigh, but so many things have since passed before my failing sight, that I could not name the place where I had met his likeness! Tell me, lad, by what name is your father known?"

"He was an officer of the States in the war of the revolution, of my own name of course; my mother's brother was called Duncan Uncas Heyward."

"Still Uncas! still Uncas!" echoed the other, trembling with eagerness. "And his father?"

"Was called the same, without the appellation of the native chief. It was to him, and to my grandmother, that the service of which I have just spoken was rendered."

"I know'd it! I know'd it!" shouted the old man, in his tremulous voice, his rigid features working powerfully, as if the names the other mentioned awakened some long dormant emotions, connected with the events of an anterior age. "I know'd it! son or grandson, it is all the same; it is the blood, and 'tis the look! Tell me, is he they call'd Duncan, without the Uncas—is he living?"

The young man shook his head sorrowfully, as he replied in the negative.

"He died full of days and of honours. Beloved, happy, and bestowing happiness!"

"Full of days!" repeated the trapper, looking down at his own meagre, but still muscular hands. "Ah! he liv'd in the settlements, and was wise only after their fashions. But you have often seen him; and you have heard him discourse of Uncas, and of the wilderness?"

"Often! he was then an officer of the king; but when the war took place between the crown and her colonies, my grandfather did not forget his birthplace, but threw off the empty allegiance of names, and was true to his proper country; he fought on the side of liberty."

"There was reason in it; and what is better, there was natur'! Come, sit ye down beside me, lad; sit ye down, and tell me of what your grand'ther used to speak, when his mind dwelt on the wonders of the wilderness."

The youth smiled, no less at the importunity than at the interest manifested by the old man; but as he found there was no longer the least appearance of any violence being contemplated, he unhesitatingly complied.

"Give it all to the trapper by rule, and by figures of speech," said Paul, very coolly taking his seat on the other side of the young soldier. "It is the fashion of old age to relish these ancient traditions, and, for that matter, I can say that I don't dislike to listen to them myself."

Middleton smiled again, and perhaps with a slight air of derision; but, good-naturedly turning to the trapper, he continued—

"It is a long, and might prove a painful story. Bloodshed and all the horrors of Indian cruelty and of Indian warfare are fearfully mingled in the narrative."

"Ay, give it all to us, stranger," continued Paul; "we are used to these matters in Kentuck, and, I must say, I think a story none the worse for having a few scalps in it!"

"But he told you of Uncas, did he?" resumed the trapper, without regarding the slight interruptions of the bee-hunter, which amounted to no more than a sort of by-play. "And what thought he and said he of the lad, in his parlour, with the comforts and ease of the settlements at his elbow?"

"I doubt not he used a language similar to that he would have adopted in the woods, and had he stood face to face, with his friend—"

"Did he call the savage his friend; the poor, naked, painted warrior? he was not too proud then to call the Indian his friend?"

"He even boasted of the connection; and as you have already heard, bestowed a name on his first-born, which is likely to be handed down as an heir-loom among the rest of his descendants."

"It was well done! like a man: ay! and like a Christian, too! He used to say the Delaware was swift of foot—did he remember that?"

"As the antelope! Indeed, he often spoke of him by the appellation of *Le Cerf Agile*, a name he had obtained by his activity."

"And bold, and fearless, lad!" continued the trapper, looking up into the eyes of his companion, with a wistfulness that bespoke the delight he received in listening to the praises of one, whom it was so very evident, he had once tenderly loved.

"Brave as a blooded hound! Without fear! He always quoted Uncas and his father, who from his wisdom was called the Great Serpent, as models of heroism and constancy."

"He did them justice! he did them justice! Truer men were not to be found in tribe or nation, be their skins of what colour they might. I see your grand'ther was just, and did his duty, too, by his offspring! 'Twas a perilous time he had of it, among them hills, and nobly did he play his own part! Tell me, lad, or officer, I should say,—since officer you be,—was this all?"

"Certainly not; it was, as I have said, a fearful tale, full of moving incidents, and the memories both of my grandfather and of my grandmother—"

"Ah!" exclaimed the trapper, tossing a hand into the air as his whole countenance lighted with the recollections the name revived. "They called her Alice! Elsie or Alice; 'tis all the same. A laughing, playful child she was, when happy; and tender and weeping in her misery! Her hair was shining and yellow, as the coat of the young fawn, and her skin clearer than the purest water that drips from the rock. Well do I remember her! I remember her right well!"

The lip of the youth slightly curled, and he regarded the old man with an expression, which might easily have been construed into a declaration that such were not his own recollections of his venerable and revered ancestor, though it would seem he did not think it necessary to say as much in words. He was content to answer—

"They both retained impressions of the dangers they had passed, by far too vivid easily to lose the recollection of any of their fellow-actors."

The trapper looked aside, and seemed to struggle with some deeply innate feeling; then, turning again towards his companion, though his honest eyes no longer dwelt with the same open interest, as before, on the countenance of the other, he continued—

"Did he tell you of them all? Were they all red-skins, but himself and the daughters of Munro?"

"No. There was a white man associated with the Delawares. A scout of the English army, but a native of the provinces."

"A drunken worthless vagabond, like most of his colour who harbour with the savages, I warrant you!"

"Old man, your grey hairs should caution you against slander. The man I speak of was of great simplicity of mind, but of sterling worth. Unlike most of those who live a border life, he united the better, instead of the worst, qualities of the two people. He was a man endowed with the choicest and perhaps rarest gift of nature; that of distinguishing good from evil. His virtues were those of simplicity, because such were the fruits of his habits, as were indeed his very prejudices. In courage he was the equal of his red associates; in warlike skill, being better instructed, their superior. 'In short, he was a noble shoot from the stock of human nature, which never could attain its proper elevation and importance, for no other reason, than because it grew in the forest:' such, old hunter, were the very words of my grandfather, when speaking of the man you imagine so worthless!"

The eyes of the trapper had sunk to the earth, as the stranger delivered this character in the ardent tones of generous youth. He played with the ears of his hound; fingered his own rustic garment, and opened and shut the pan of his rifle, with hands that trembled in a manner that would have implied their total unfitness to wield the weapon. When the other had concluded, he hoarsely added—

"Your grand'ther didn't then entirely forget the white man!"

"So far from that, there are already three among us, who have also names derived from that scout."

"A name, did you say?" exclaimed the old man, starting; "what, the name of the solitary, unlearned hunter? Do the great, and the rich, and the honoured, and, what is better still, the just, do they bear his very, actual name?"

"It is borne by my brother, and by two of my cousins, whatever may be their titles to be described by the terms you have mentioned."

"Do you mean the actual name itself; spelt with the very same letters, beginning with an N and ending with an L?"

"Exactly the same," the youth smilingly replied. "No, no, we have forgotten nothing that was his. I have at this moment a dog brushing a deer, not far from this, who is come of a hound that very scout sent as a present after his friends, and which was of the stock he always used himself: a truer breed, in nose and foot, is not to be found in the wide Union."

"Hector!" said the old man, struggling to conquer an emotion that nearly suffocated him, and speaking to his hound in the sort of tones he would have used to a child, "do ye hear that, pup! your kin and blood are in the prairies! A name—it is wonderful—very wonderful!"

Nature could endure no more. Overcome by a flood of unusual and extraordinary sensations, and stimulated by tender and long dormant recollections, strangely and unexpectedly revived, the old man had just self-command enough to add, in a voice that was hollow and unnatural, through the efforts he made to command it—

"Boy, I am that scout; a warrior once, a miserable trapper now!" when the tears broke over his wasted cheeks, out of fountains that had long been dried, and, sinking his face between his knees, he covered it decently with his buckskin garment, and sobbed aloud.

The spectacle produced correspondent emotions in his companions. Paul Hover had actually swallowed each syllable of the discourse as they fell alternately from the different speakers, his feelings keeping equal pace with the increasing interest of the scene. Unused to such strange sensations, he was turning his face on every side of him, to avoid he knew not what, until he saw the tears and heard the sobs of the old man, when he sprang to his feet, and grappling his guest fiercely by the throat, he demanded by what authority he had made his aged companion weep. A flash of recollection crossing his brain at the same instant, he released his hold, and stretching forth an arm in the very wantonness of gratification, he seized the Doctor by the hair, which instantly revealed its artificial formation, by cleaving to his hand, leaving the white and shining poll of the naturalist with a covering no warmer than the skin.

"What think you of that, Mr. Bug-gatherer?" he rather shouted than cried: "is not this a strange bee to line into his hole?"

"'Tis remarkable! wonderful! edifying!" returned the lover of nature, good-humouredly recovering his wig, with twinkling eyes and a husky voice. "'Tis rare and commendable. Though I doubt not in the exact order of causes and effects."

With this sudden outburst, however, the commotion instantly subsided; the three spectators clustering around the trapper with a species of awe, at beholding the tears of one so aged.

"It must be so, or how could he be so familiar with a history that is little known beyond my own family," at length the youth observed, not ashamed to acknowledge how much he had been affected, by unequivocally drying his own eyes.

"True!" echoed Paul; "if you want any more evidence I will swear to it! I know every word of it myself to be true as the gospel!"

"And yet we had long supposed him dead!" continued the soldier. "My grandfather had filled his days with honour, and he had believed himself the junior of the two."

"It is not often that youth has an opportunity of thus looking down on the weakness of age!" the trapper observed, raising his head, and looking around him with composure and dignity. "That I am still here, young man, is the pleasure of the Lord, who has spared me until I have seen fourscore long and laborious years, for his own secret ends. That I am the man I say, you need not doubt; for why should I go to my grave with so cheap a lie in my mouth?"

"I do not hesitate to believe; I only marvel that it should be so! But why do I find you, venerable and excellent friend of my parents, in these wastes, so far from the comforts and safety of the lower country?"

"I have come into these plains to escape the sound of the axe; for here surely the chopper can never follow! But I may put the like question to yourself. Are you of the party which the States have sent into their new purchase, to look after the natur' of the bargain they have made?"

"I am not. Lewis is making his way up the river, some hundreds of miles from this. I come on a private adventure."

"Though it is no cause of wonder, that a man whose strength and eyes have failed him as a hunter, should be seen nigh the haunts of the beaver, using a trap instead of a rifle, it is strange that one so young and prosperous, and bearing the commission of the Great Father, should be moving among the prairies, without even a camp-colourman to do his biddings!"

“You would think my reasons sufficient did you know them, as know them you shall if you are disposed to listen to my story. I think you all honest, and men who would rather aid than betray one bent on a worthy object.”

“Come, then, and tell us at your leisure,” said the trapper, seating himself, and beckoning to the youth to follow his example. The latter willingly complied; and after Paul and the Doctor had disposed of themselves to their several likings, the new comer entered into a narrative of the singular reasons which had led him so far into the deserts.

## CHAPTER XI

So foul a sky clears not without a storm.  
—King John.

In the mean time the industrious and irreclaimable hours continued their labours. The sun, which had been struggling through such masses of vapour throughout the day, fell slowly in a streak of clear sky, and thence sunk gloriously into the gloomy wastes, as he is wont to settle into the waters of the ocean. The vast herds which had been grazing among the wild pastures of the prairies, gradually disappeared, and the endless flocks of aquatic birds, that were pursuing their customary annual journey from the virgin lakes of the north towards the gulf of Mexico, ceased to fan that air, which had now become loaded with dew and vapour. In short, the shadows of night fell upon the rock, adding the mantle of darkness to the other dreary accompaniments of the place.

As the light began to fail, Esther collected her younger children at her side, and placing herself on a projecting point of her insulated fortress, she sat patiently awaiting the return of the hunters. Ellen Wade was at no great distance, seeming to keep a little aloof from the anxious circle, as if willing to mark the distinction which existed in their characters.

“Your uncle is, and always will be, a dull calculator, Nell,” observed the mother, after a long pause in a conversation that had turned on the labours of the day; “a lazy hand at figures and foreknowledge is that said Ishmael Bush! Here he sat lolloping about the rock from light till noon, doing nothing but scheme—scheme—scheme—with seven as noble boys at his elbows as woman ever gave to man; and what’s the upshot? why, night is setting in, and his needful work not yet ended.”

“It is not prudent, certainly, aunt,” Ellen replied, with a vacancy in her air, that proved how little she knew what she was saying; “and it is setting a very bad example to his sons.”

“Hoity, toity, girl! who has reared you up as a judge over your elders, ay, and your betters, too! I should like to see the man on the whole frontier, who sets a more honest example to his children than this same Ishmael Bush! Show me, if you can, Miss Fault-finder, but not fault-mender, a set of boys who will, on occasion, sooner chop a piece of logging and dress it for the crop, than my own children; though I say it myself, who, perhaps, should be silent; or a cradler that knows better how to lead a gang of hands through a field of wheat, leaving a cleaner stubble in his track, than my own good man! Then, as a father, he is as generous as a lord; for his sons have only to name the spot where they would like to pitch, and he gives ’em a deed of the plantation, and no charge for papers is ever made!”

As the wife of the squatter concluded, she raised a hollow, taunting laugh, that was echoed from the mouths of several juvenile imitators, whom she was training to a life as shiftless and lawless as her own; but which, notwithstanding its uncertainty, was not without its secret charms.

“Holloa! old Eester;” shouted the well-known voice of her husband, from the plain beneath; “ar’ you keeping your junkets, while we are finding you in venison and buffaloe beef? Come down—come down, old girl, with all your young; and lend us a hand to carry up the meat;—why, what a frolic you ar’ in, woman! Come down, come down, for the boys are at hand, and we have work here for double your number.”

Ishmael might have spared his lungs more than a moiety of the effort they were compelled to make in order that he should be heard. He had hardly uttered the name of his wife, before the whole of the crouching circle rose in a body, and tumbling over each other, they precipitated themselves down the dangerous passes of the rock with ungovernable impatience. Esther followed the young fry with a more measured gait; nor did Ellen deem it wise, or rather discreet, to remain behind. Consequently, the whole were soon assembled at the base of the citadel, on the open plain.

Here the squatter was found, staggering under the weight of a fine fat buck, attended by one or two of his younger sons. Abiram quickly appeared, and before many minutes had elapsed, most of the hunters dropped in, singly and in pairs, each man bringing with him some fruits of his prowess in the field.

“The plain is free from red-skins, to-night at least,” said Ishmael, after the bustle of reception had a little subsided; “for I have scoured the prairie for many long miles, on my own feet, and I call myself a judge of the print of an Indian moccasin. So, old woman, you can give us a few steaks of the venison, and then we will sleep on the day’s work.”

“I’ll not swear there are no savages near us,” said Abiram. “I, too, know something of the trail of a red-skin; and, unless my eyes have lost some of their sight, I would swear, boldly, that there ar’ Indians at hand. But wait till Asa comes in. He pass’d the spot where I found the marks, and the boy knows something of such matters too.”

“Ay, the boy knows too much of many things,” returned Ishmael, gloomily. “It will be better for him when he thinks he knows less. But what matters it, Hetty, if all the Sioux tribes, west of the big river, are within a mile of us; they will find it no easy matter to scale this rock, in the teeth of ten bold men.”

“Call ’em twelve at once, Ishmael; call ’em twelve!” cried his termagant assistant. “For if your moth-gathering, bug-hunting friend, can be counted a man, I beg you will set me down as two. I will not turn my back to him, with the rifle or the shot-gun; and for courage!—the yearling heifer, that them skulking devils the Tetons stole, was the biggest coward among us all, and after her came your drivelling Doctor. Ah! Ishmael, you rarely attempt a regular trade but you come out the loser; and this man, I reckon, is the hardest bargain among them all! Would you think it, the fellow ordered me a blister around my mouth, because I complained of a pain in the foot?”

“It is a pity, Eester,” the husband coolly answered, “that you did not take it; I reckon it would have done considerable good. But,

boys, if it should turn out as Abiram thinks, that there are Indians near us, we may have to scamper up the rock, and lose our suppers after all; therefore we will make sure of the game, and talk over the performances of the Doctor when we have nothing better to do."

The hint was taken; and in a few minutes, the exposed situation in which the family was collected, was exchanged for the more secure elevation of the rock. Here Esther busied herself, working and scolding with equal industry, until the repast was prepared; when she summoned her husband to his meal in a voice as sonorous as that with which the Imam reminds the Faithful of a more important duty.

When each had assumed his proper and customary place around the smoking viands, the squatter set the example by beginning to partake of a delicious venison steak, prepared like the hump of the bison, with a skill that rather increased than concealed its natural properties. A painter would gladly have seized the moment, to transfer the wild and characteristic scene to the canvass.

The reader will remember that the citadel of Ishmael stood insulated, lofty, ragged, and nearly inaccessible. A bright flashing fire that was burning on the centre of its summit, and around which the busy group was clustered, lent it the appearance of some tall Pharos placed in the centre of the deserts, to light such adventurers as wandered through their broad wastes. The flashing flame gleamed from one sun-burnt countenance to another, exhibiting every variety of expression, from the juvenile simplicity of the children, mingled as it was with a shade of the wildness peculiar to their semi-barbarous lives, to the dull and immovable apathy that dwelt on the features of the squatter, when unexcited. Occasionally a gust of wind would fan the embers; and, as a brighter light shot upwards, the little solitary tent was seen as it were suspended in the gloom of the upper air. All beyond was enveloped, as usual at that hour, in an impenetrable body of darkness.

"It is unaccountable that Asa should choose to be out of the way at such a time as this," Esther pettishly observed. "When all is finished and to rights, we shall have the boy coming up, grumbling for his meal, and hungry as a bear after his winter's nap. His stomach is as true as the best clock in Kentucky, and seldom wants winding up to tell the time, whether of day or night. A desperate eater is Asa, when a-hungred by a little work!"

Ishmael looked sternly around the circle of his silent sons, as if to see whether any among them would presume to say aught in favour of the absent delinquent. But now, when no exciting causes existed to arouse their slumbering tempers, it seemed to be too great an effort to enter on the defence of their rebellious brother. Abiram, however, who, since the pacification, either felt, or affected to feel, a more generous interest in his late adversary, saw fit to express an anxiety, to which the others were strangers—

"It will be well if the boy has escaped the Tetons!" he muttered. "I should be sorry to have Asa, who is one of the stoutest of our party, both in heart and hand, fall into the power of the red devils."

"Look to yourself, Abiram; and spare your breath, if you can use it only to frighten the woman and her huddling girls. You have whitened the face of Ellen Wade, already; who looks as pale as if she was staring to-day at the very Indians you name, when I was forced to speak to her through the rifle, because I couldn't reach her ears with my tongue. How was it, Nell! you have never given the reason of your deafness?"

The colour of Ellen's cheek changed as suddenly as the squatter's piece had flashed on the occasion to which he alluded, the burning glow suffusing her features, until it even mantled her throat with its fine healthful tinge. She hung her head abashed, but did not seem to think it necessary to reply.

Ishmael, too sluggish to pursue the subject, or content with the pointed allusion he had just made, rose from his seat on the rock, and stretching his heavy frame, like a well-fed and fattened ox, he announced his intention to sleep. Among a race who lived chiefly for the indulgence of the natural wants, such a declaration could not fail of meeting with sympathetic dispositions. One after another disappeared, each seeking his or her rude dormitory; and, before many minutes, Esther, who by this time had scolded the younger fry to sleep, found herself, if we except the usual watchman below, in solitary possession of the naked rock.

Whatever less valuable fruits had been produced in this uneducated woman by her migratory habits, the great principle of female nature was too deeply rooted ever to be entirely eradicated. Of a powerful, not to say fierce temperament, her passions were violent and difficult to be smothered. But, however she might and did abuse the accidental prerogatives of her situation, love for her offspring, while it often slumbered, could never be said to become extinct. She liked not the protracted absence of Asa. Too fearless herself to have hesitated an instant on her own account about crossing the dark abyss, into which she now sat looking with longing eyes, her busy imagination, in obedience to this inextinguishable sentiment, began to conjure nameless evils on account of her son. It might be true, as Abiram had hinted, that he had become a captive to some of the tribes who were hunting the buffaloe in that vicinity, or even a still more dreadful calamity might have befallen. So thought the mother, while silence and darkness lent their aid to the secret impulses of nature.

Agitated by these reflections, which put sleep at defiance, Esther continued at her post, listening with that sort of acuteness which is termed instinct in the animals a few degrees below her in the scale of intelligence, for any of those noises which might indicate the approach of footsteps. At length, her wishes had an appearance of being realised, for the long desired sounds were distinctly audible, and presently she distinguished the dim form of a man at the base of the rock.

"Now, Asa, richly do you deserve to be left with an earthen bed this blessed night!" the woman began to mutter, with a revolution in her feelings, that will not be surprising to those who have made the contradictions that give variety to the human character a study. "And a hard one I've a mind it shall be! Why Abner; Abner; you Abner, do you sleep? Let me not see you dare to open the hole, till I get down. I will know who it is that wishes to disturb a peaceable, ay, and an honest family too, at such a time in the night as this!"

"Woman!" exclaimed a voice, that intended to bluster, while the speaker was manifestly a little apprehensive of the consequences; "Woman, I forbid you on pain of the law to project any of your infernal missiles. I am a citizen, and a freeholder, and a graduate of two universities; and I stand upon my rights! Beware of malice prepense, of chance-medley, and of manslaughter. It is I—your amicus; a friend and inmate. I—Dr. Obed Battius."

"Who?" demanded Esther, in a voice that nearly refused to convey her words to the ears of the anxious listener beneath. "Did you

say it was not Asa?"

"Nay, I am neither Asa, nor Absalom, nor any of the Hebrew princes, but Obed, the root and stock of them all. Have I not said, woman, that you keep one in attendance who is entitled to a peaceable as well as an honourable admission? Do you take me for an animal of the class amphibia, and that I can play with my lungs as a blacksmith does with his bellows?"

The naturalist might have expended his breath much longer, without producing any desirable result, had Esther been his only auditor. Disappointed and alarmed, the woman had already sought her pallet, and was preparing, with a sort of desperate indifference, to compose herself to sleep. Abner, the sentinel below, however, had been aroused from an exceedingly equivocal situation by the outcry; and as he had now regained sufficient consciousness to recognise the voice of the physician, the latter was admitted with the least possible delay. Dr. Battius bustled through the narrow entrance, with an air of singular impatience, and was already beginning to mount the difficult ascent, when catching a view of the porter, he paused, to observe with an air that he intended should be impressively admonitory—

"Abner, there are dangerous symptoms of somnolency about thee! It is sufficiently exhibited in the tendency to hiation, and may prove dangerous not only to yourself, but to all thy father's family."

"You never made a greater mistake, Doctor," returned the youth, gaping like an indolent lion; "I haven't a symptom, as you call it, about any part of me; and as to father and the children, I reckon the small-pox and the measles have been thoroughly through the breed these many months ago."

Content with his brief admonition, the naturalist had surmounted half the difficulties of the ascent before the deliberate Abner ended his justification. On the summit, Obed fully expected to encounter Esther, of whose linguacious powers he had too often been furnished with the most sinister reproofs, and of which he stood in an awe too salutary to covet a repetition of the attacks. The reader can foresee that he was to be agreeably disappointed. Treading lightly, and looking timidly over his shoulder, as if he apprehended a shower of something, even more formidable than words, the Doctor proceeded to the place which had been allotted to himself in the general disposition of the dormitories.

Instead of sleeping, the worthy naturalist sat ruminating over what he had both seen and heard that day, until the tossing and mutterings which proceeded from the cabin of Esther, who was his nearest neighbour, advertised him of the wakeful situation of its inmate. Perceiving the necessity of doing something to disarm this female Cerberus, before his own purpose could be accomplished, the Doctor, reluctant as he was to encounter her tongue, found himself compelled to invite a colloquial communication.

"You appear not to sleep, my very kind and worthy Mrs. Bush," he said, determined to commence his applications with a plaster that was usually found to adhere; "you appear to rest badly, my excellent hostess; can I administer to your ailings?"

"What would you give me, man?" grumbled Esther; "a blister to make me sleep?"

"Say rather a cataplasm. But if you are in pain, here are some cordial drops, which, taken in a glass of my own cogniac, will give you rest, if I know aught of the *materia medica*."

The Doctor, as he very well knew, had assailed Esther on her weak side; and, as he doubted not of the acceptable quality of his prescription, he sat himself at work, without unnecessary delay, to prepare it. When he made his offering, it was received in a snappish and threatening manner, but swallowed with a facility that sufficiently proclaimed how much it was relished. The woman muttered her thanks, and her leech resealed himself in silence, to await the operation of the dose. In less than half an hour the breathing of Esther became so profound, and, as the Doctor himself might have termed it, so very abstracted, that had he not known how easy it was to ascribe this new instance of somnolency to the powerful dose of opium with which he had garnished the brandy, he might have seen reason to distrust his own prescription. With the sleep of the restless woman, the stillness became profound and general.

Then Dr. Battius saw fit to arise, with the silence and caution of the midnight robber, and to steal out of his own cabin, or rather kennel, for it deserved no better name, towards the adjoining dormitories. Here he took time to assure himself that all his neighbours were buried in deep sleep. Once advised of this important fact, he hesitated no longer, but commenced the difficult ascent which led to the upper pinnacle of the rock. His advance, though abundantly guarded, was not entirely noiseless; but while he was felicitating himself on having successfully effected his object, and he was in the very act of placing his foot on the highest ledge a hand was laid upon the skirts of his coat, which as effectually put an end to his advance, as if the gigantic strength of Ishmael himself had pinned him to the earth.

"Is there sickness in the tent," whispered a soft voice in his very ear, "that Dr. Battius is called to visit it at such an hour?"

So soon as the heart of the naturalist had returned from its hasty expedition into his throat, as one less skilled than Dr. Battius in the formation of the animal would have been apt to have accounted for the extraordinary sensation with which he received this unlooked-for interruption, he found resolution to reply; using, as much in terror as in prudence, the same precaution in the indulgence of his voice.

"My worthy Nelly! I am greatly rejoiced to find it is no other than thee. Hist! child, hist! Should Ishmael gain a knowledge of our plans, he would not hesitate to cast us both from this rock, upon the plain beneath. Hist! Nelly, hist!"

As the Doctor delivered his injunctions between the intervals of his ascent, by the time they were concluded, both he and his auditor had gained the upper level.

"And now, Dr. Battius," the girl gravely demanded, "may I know the reason why you have run so great a risk of flying from this place, without wings, and at the certain expense of your neck?"

"Nothing shall be concealed from thee, worthy and trusty Nelly—but are you certain that Ishmael will not awake?"

"No fear of him; he will sleep until the sun scorches his eyelids. The danger is from my aunt."

"Esther sleepeth!" the Doctor sententiously replied. "Ellen, you have been watching on this rock, to-day?"

"I was ordered to do so."



“And you have seen the bison, and the antelope, and the wolf, and the deer, as usual; animals of the orders, pecora, belluae, and ferae.”

“I have seen the creatures you named in English, but I know nothing of the Indian languages.”

“There is still an order that I have not named, which you have also seen. The primates—is it not true?”

“I cannot say. I know no animal by that name.”

“Nay, Ellen, you confer with a friend. Of the genus, homo, child?”

“Whatever else I may have had in view, I have not seen the vespertilio horribi—”

“Hush, Nelly, thy vivacity will betray us! Tell me, girl, have you not seen certain bipeds, called men, wandering about the prairies?”

“Surely. My uncle and his sons have been hunting the buffaloe, since the sun began to fall.”

“I must speak in the vernacular, to be comprehended. Ellen, I would say of the species, Kentucky.”

Though Ellen reddened like the rose, her blushes were concealed by the darkness. She hesitated an instant, and then summoned sufficient spirit to say, decidedly—

“If you wish to speak in parables, Doctor Battius, you must find another listener. Put your questions plainly in English, and I will answer them honestly in the same tongue.”

“I have been journeying in this desert, as thou knowest, Nelly, in quest of animals that have been hidden from the eyes of science, until now. Among others, I have discovered a primates, of the genus, homo; species, Kentucky; which I term, Paul—”

“Hist, for the sake of mercy!” said Ellen; “speak lower, Doctor, or we shall be ruined.”

“Hover; by profession a collector of the apes, or bee,” continued the other. “Do I use the vernacular now,—am I understood?”

“Perfectly, perfectly,” returned the girl, breathing with difficulty, in her surprise. “But what of him? did he tell you to mount this rock?—he knows nothing, himself; for the oath I gave my uncle has shut my mouth.”

“Ay, but there is one that has taken no oath, who has revealed all. I would that the mantle which is wrapped around the mysteries of nature, were as effectually withdrawn from its hidden treasures! Ellen! Ellen! the man with whom I have unwittingly formed a compactum, or agreement, is sadly forgetful of the obligations of honesty! Thy uncle, child.”

“You mean Ishmael Bush, my father’s brother’s widow’s husband,” returned the offended girl, a little proudly.—“Indeed, indeed, it is cruel to reproach me with a tie that chance has formed, and which I would rejoice so much to break for ever!”

The humbled Ellen could utter no more, but sinking on a projection of the rock, she began to sob in a manner that rendered their situation doubly critical. The Doctor muttered a few words, which he intended as an apologetic explanation, but before he had time to complete his laboured vindication, she arose and said with decision—

“I did not come here to pass my time in foolish tears, nor you to try to stop them. What then has brought you hither?”

“I must see the inmate of that tent.”

“You know what it contains?”

“I am taught to believe I do; and I bear a letter, which I must deliver with my own hands. If the animal prove a quadruped, Ishmael is a true man—if a biped, fledged or unfledged, I care not, he is false, and our compactum at an end!”

Ellen made a sign for the Doctor to remain where he was, and to be silent. She then glided into the tent, where she continued many minutes, that proved exceedingly weary and anxious to the expectant without, but the instant she returned, she took him by the arm, and together they entered beneath the folds of the mysterious cloth.

## CHAPTER XII

Pray God the Duke of York excuse himself!  
—King Henry VI.

The mustering of the borderers on the following morning was silent, sullen, and gloomy. The repast of that hour was wanting in the inharmonious accompaniment with which Esther ordinarily enlivened their meals; for the effects of the powerful opiate the Doctor had administered still muddled her intellects. The young men brooded over the absence of their elder brother, and the brows of Ishmael himself were knit, as he cast his scowling eyes from one to the other, like a man preparing to meet and to repel an expected assault on his authority. In the midst of this family distrust, Ellen and her midnight confederate, the naturalist, took their usual places among the children, without awakening suspicion or exciting comment. The only apparent fruits of the adventure in which they had been engaged, were occasional upliftings of the eyes, on the part of the Doctor, which were mistaken by the observers for some of his scientific contemplations of the heavens, but which, in reality, were no other than furtive glances at the fluttering walls of the proscribed tent.

At length the squatter, who had waited in vain for some more decided manifestation of the expected rising among his sons, resolved to make a demonstration of his own intentions.

“Asa shall account to me for this undutiful conduct!” he observed. “Here has the livelong night gone by, and he out-lying on the prairie, when his hand and his rifle might both have been wanted in a brush with the Siouxs, for any right he had to know the contrary.”

“Spare your breath, good man,” retorted his wife; “be saving of your breath; for you may have to call long enough for the boy before he will answer!”

“It ar’ a fact, that some men be so womanish, as to let the young master the old! But, you, old Esther, should know better than to think such will ever be the nature of things in the family of Ishmael Bush.”

“Ah! you are a hectorer with the boys, when need calls! I know it well, Ishmael; and one of your sons have you driven from you, by your temper; and that, too, at a time when he is most wanted.”

“Father,” said Abner, whose sluggish nature had gradually been stimulating itself to the exertion of taking so bold a stand, “the boys and I have pretty generally concluded to go out on the search of Asa. We are disagreeable about his camping on the prairie, instead of coming in to his own bed, as we all know he would like to do.”

“Pshaw!” muttered Abiram; “the boy has killed a buck; or perhaps a buffaloe; and he is sleeping by the carcass to keep off the wolves, till day; we shall soon see him, or hear him bawling for help to bring in his load.”

“’Tis little help that a son of mine will call for, to shoulder a buck or to quarter your wild-beef,” returned the mother. “And you, Abiram, to say so uncertain a thing! you, who said yourself that the red-skins had been prowling around this place, no later than the yesterday—”

“I!” exclaimed her brother, hastily, as if anxious to retract an error; “I said it then, and I say it now and so you will find it to be. The Tetons are in our neighbourhood, and happy will it prove for the boy if he is well shut of them.”

“It seems to me,” said Dr. Battius, speaking with the sort of deliberation and dignity one is apt to use after having thoroughly ripened his opinions by sufficient reflection,—“it seems to me, a man but little skilled in the signs and tokens of Indian warfare, especially as practised in these remote plains, but one, who I may say without vanity has some insight into the mysteries of nature,—it seems, then, to me, thus humbly qualified, that when doubts exist in a matter of moment, it would always be the wisest course to appease them.”

“No more of your doctoring for me!” cried the grum Esther; “no more of your quiddities in a healthy family, say I! Here was I doing well, only a little out of sorts with over instructing the young, and you dos’d me with a drug that hangs about my tongue, like a pound weight on a humming-bird’s wing!”

“Is the medicine out?” drily demanded Ishmael: “it must be a rare dose that gives a heavy feel to the tongue of old Eester!”

“Friend,” continued the Doctor, waving his hand for the angry wife to maintain the peace, “that it cannot perform all that is said of it, the very charge of good Mrs. Bush is a sufficient proof. But to speak of the absent Asa. There is doubt as to his fate, and there is a proposition to solve it. Now, in the natural sciences truth is always a desideratum; and I confess it would seem to be equally so in the present case of domestic uncertainty, which may be called a vacuum where according to the laws of physis, there should exist some pretty palpable proofs of materiality.”

“Don’t mind him, don’t mind him,” cried Esther, observing that the rest of his auditors listened with an attention which might proceed, equally, from acquiescence in his proposal or ignorance of its meaning. “There is a drug in every word he utters.”

“Dr. Battius wishes to say,” Ellen modestly interposed, “that as some of us think Asa is in danger, and some think otherwise, the whole family might pass an hour or two in looking for him.”

“Does he?” interrupted the woman; “then Dr. Battius has more sense in him than I believed! She is right, Ishmael; and what she says, shall be done. I will shoulder a rifle myself; and woe betide the red-skin that crosses my path! I have pulled a trigger before to-day; ay, and heard an Indian yell, too, to my sorrow.”

The spirit of Esther diffused itself, like the stimulus which attends a war-cry, among her sons. They arose in a body, and declared their determination to second so bold a resolution. Ishmael prudently yielded to an impulse he could not resist, and in a few minutes the woman appeared, shouldering her arms, prepared to lead forth, in person, such of her descendants as chose to follow.

"Let them stay with the children that please," she said, "and them follow me, who ar' not chicken-hearted!"

"Abiram, it will not do to leave the huts without some guard," Ishmael whispered, glancing his eye upward.

The man whom he addressed started, and betrayed extraordinary eagerness in his reply.

"I will tarry and watch the camp."

A dozen voices were instantly raised in objections to this proposal. He was wanted to point out the places where the hostile tracks had been seen, and his termagant sister openly scouted at the idea, as unworthy of his manhood. The reluctant Abiram was compelled to yield, and Ishmael made a new disposition for the defence of the place; which was admitted, by every one, to be all-important to their security and comfort.

He offered the post of commandant to Dr. Battius, who, however, peremptorily and somewhat haughtily declined the doubtful honour; exchanging looks of intelligence with Ellen, as he did so. In this dilemma the squatter was obliged to constitute the girl herself castellan; taking care, however, in deputing this important trust, to omit no words of caution and instruction. When this preliminary point was settled, the young men proceeded to arrange certain means of defence, and signals of alarm, that were adapted to the weakness and character of the garrison. Several masses of rock were drawn to the edge of the upper level, and so placed as to leave it at the discretion of the feeble Ellen and her associates, to cast them or not, as they might choose, on the heads of any invaders, who would, of necessity, be obliged to mount the eminence by the difficult and narrow passage already so often mentioned. In addition to this formidable obstruction, the barriers were strengthened and rendered nearly impassable. Smaller missiles, that might be hurled even by the hands of the younger children, but which would prove, from the elevation of the place, exceedingly dangerous, were provided in profusion. A pile of dried leaves and splinters were placed, as a beacon, on the upper rock, and then, even in the jealous judgment of the squatter, the post was deemed competent to maintain a creditable siege.

The moment the rock was thought to be in a state of sufficient security, the party who composed what might be called the sortie, sallied forth on their anxious expedition. The advance was led by Esther in person, who, attired in a dress half masculine, and bearing a weapon like the rest, seemed no unfit leader for the group of wildly clad frontiersmen, that followed in her rear.

"Now, Abiram;" cried the Amazon, in a voice that was cracked and harsh, for the simple reason of being used too often on a strained and unnatural key, "now, Abiram, run with your nose low; show yourself a hound of the true breed, and do some credit to your training. You it was that saw the prints of the Indian moccasin, and it behoves you, to let others be as wise as yourself. Come; come to the front, man; and give us a bold lead."

The brother, who appeared at all times to stand in awe of his sister's authority, complied; though it was with a reluctance so evident, as to excite sneers, even among the unobservant and indolent sons of the squatter. Ishmael, himself, moved among his tall children, like one who expected nothing from the search, and who was indifferent alike to its success or failure. In this manner the party proceeded until their distant fortress had sunk so low, as to present an object no larger nor more distinct than a hazy point, on the margin of the prairie. Hitherto their progress had been silent and somewhat rapid, for as swell after swell was mounted and passed, without varying, or discovering a living object to enliven the monotony of the view, even the tongue of Esther was hushed in increasing anxiety. Here, however, Ishmael chose to pause, and casting the butt of his rifle from his shoulder to the ground, he observed—

"This is enough. Buffaloe signs, and deer signs, ar' plenty; but where ar' thy Indian footsteps, Abiram?"

"Still farther west," returned the other, pointing in the direction he named. "This was the spot where I struck the tracks of the buck; it was after I took the deer, that I fell upon the Teton trail."

"And a bloody piece of work you made of it, man," cried the squatter, pointing tauntily to the soiled garments of his kinsman, and then directing the attention of the spectators to his own, by the way of a triumphant contrast. "Here have I cut the throats of two lively does, and a scampering fawn, without spot or stain; while you, blundering dog as you ar', have made as much work for Eester and her girls, as though butchering was your regular calling. Come, boys; it is enough. I am too old not to know the signs of the frontiers; no Indian has been here since the last fall of water. Follow me; and I will make a turn that shall give us at least the beef of a fallow cow for our trouble."

"Follow me!" echoed Esther, stepping undauntedly forward. "I am leader to-day, and I will be followed. Who so proper, let me know, as a mother, to head a search for her own lost child?"

Ishmael regarded his intractable mate with a smile of indulgent pity. Observing that she had already struck out a path for herself, different both from that of Abiram and the one he had seen fit to choose, and being unwilling to draw the cord of authority too tight, just at that moment, he submitted to her will. But Dr. Battius, who had hitherto been a silent and thoughtful attendant on the woman, now saw fit to raise his feeble voice in the way of remonstrance.

"I agree with thy partner in life, worthy and gentle Mrs. Bush," he said, "in believing that some ignis fatuus of the imagination has deceived Abiram, in the signs or symptoms of which he has spoken."

"Symptoms, yourself!" interrupted the termagant. "This is no time for bookish words, nor is this a place to stop and swallow medicines. If you are a-leg-weary, say so, as a plain-speaking man should; then seat yourself on the prairie, like a hound that is foot-sore, and take your natural rest."

"I accord in the opinion," the naturalist calmly replied, complying literally with the opinion of the deriding Esther, by taking his seat, very coolly, by the side of an indigenous shrub; the examination of which he commenced, on the instant, in order that science might not loose any of its just and important dues. "I honour your excellent advice, Mistress Esther, as you may perceive. Go thou in quest of thy offspring; while I tarry here, in pursuit of that which is better; viz. an insight into the arcana of Nature's volume."

The woman answered with a hollow, unnatural, and scornful laugh, and even her heavy sons, as they slowly passed the seat of the already abstracted naturalist, did not disdain to manifest their contempt in smiles. In a few minutes the train mounted the nearest eminence, and, as it turned the rounded acclivity, the Doctor was left to pursue his profitable investigations in entire solitude.

Another half-hour passed, during which Esther continued to advance, on her seemingly fruitless search. Her pauses, however, were becoming frequent, and her looks wandering and uncertain, when footsteps were heard clattering through the bottom, and at the next instant a buck was seen to bound up the ascent, and to dart from before their eyes, in the direction of the naturalist. So sudden and unlooked for had been the passage of the animal, and so much had he been favoured by the shape of the ground, that before any one of the foresters had time to bring his rifle to his shoulder, it was already beyond the range of a bullet.

"Look out for the wolf!" shouted Abner, shaking his head in vexation, at being a single moment too late. "A wolf's skin will be no bad gift in a winter's night; ay, yonder the hungry devil comes!"

"Hold!" cried Ishmael, knocking up the levelled weapon of his too eager son. "'Tis not a wolf; but a hound of thorough blood and bottom. Ha! we have hunters nigh: there ar' two of them!"

He was still speaking, when the animals in question came leaping on the track of the deer, striving with noble ardour to outdo each other. One was an aged dog, whose strength seemed to be sustained purely by generous emulation, and the other a pup, that gambolled even while he pressed most warmly on the chase. They both ran, however, with clean and powerful leaps, carrying their noses high, like animals of the most keen and subtle scent. They had passed; and in another minute they would have been running open-mouthed with the deer in view, had not the younger dog suddenly bounded from the course, and uttered a cry of surprise. His aged companion stopped also, and returned panting and exhausted to the place, where the other was whirling around in swift, and apparently in mad evolutions, circling the spot in his own footsteps, and continuing his outcry, in a short, snappish barking. But, when the elder hound had reached the spot, he seated himself, and lifting his nose high into the air, he raised a long, loud, and wailing howl.

"It must be a strong scent," said Abner, who had been, with the rest of the family, an admiring observer of the movements of the dogs, "that can break off two such creatur's so suddenly from their trail."

"Murder them!" cried Abiram; "I'll swear to the old hound; 'tis the dog of the trapper, whom we now know to be our mortal enemy."

Though the brother of Esther gave so hostile advice, he appeared in no way ready to put it in execution himself. The surprise, which had taken possession of the whole party, exhibited itself in his own vacant wondering stare, as strongly as in any of the admiring visages by whom he was surrounded. His denunciation, therefore, notwithstanding its dire import, was disregarded; and the dogs were left to obey the impulses of their mysterious instinct, without let or hinderance.

It was long before any of the spectators broke the silence; but the squatter, at length, so far recollected his authority, as to take on himself the right to control the movements of his children.

"Come away, boys; come away, and leave the hounds to sing their tunes for their own amusement," Ishmael said, in his coldest manner. "I scorn to take the life of a beast, because its master has pitched himself too nigh my clearing; come away, boys, come away; we have enough of our own work before us, without turning aside to do that of the whole neighbourhood."

"Come not away!" cried Esther, in tones that sounded like the admonitions of some sibyl. "I say, come not away, my children. There is a meaning and a warning in this; and as I am a woman and a mother, will I know the truth of it all!"

So saying, the awakened wife brandished her weapon, with an air that was not without its wild and secret influence, and led the way towards the spot where the dogs still remained, filling the air with their long-drawn and piteous complaints. The whole party followed in her steps, some too indolent to oppose, others obedient to her will, and all more or less excited by the uncommon character of the scene.

"Tell me, you Abner—Abiram—Ishmael!" the woman cried, standing over a spot where the earth was trampled and beaten, and plainly sprinkled with blood; "tell me, you who ar' hunters! what sort of animal has here met his death?—Speak!—Ye ar' men, and used to the signs of the plains; is it the blood of wolf or panther?"

"A buffaloe—and a noble and powerful creatur' has it been!" returned the squatter, who looked down calmly on the fatal signs which so strangely affected his wife. "Here are the marks of the spot where he has struck his hoofs into the earth, in the death-struggle; and yonder he has plunged and torn the ground with his horns. Ay, a buffaloe bull of wonderful strength and courage has he been!"

"And who has slain him?" continued Esther; "man where are the offals?—Wolves!—They devour not the hide! Tell me, ye men and hunters, is this the blood of a beast?"

"The creatur' has plunged over the hillock," said Abner, who had proceeded a short distance beyond the rest of the party. "Ah! there you will find it, in yon swale of alders. Look! a thousand carrion birds, ar' hovering above the carcass."

"The animal has still life in him," returned the squatter, "or the buzzards would settle upon their prey! By the action of the dogs it must be something ravenous; I reckon it is the white bear from the upper falls. They are said to cling desperately to life!"

"Let us go back," said Abiram; "there may be danger, and there can be no good in attacking a ravenous beast. Remember, Ishmael, 'twill be a risky job, and one of small profit!"

The young men smiled at this new proof of the well known pusillanimity of their uncle. The oldest even proceeded so far as to express his contempt, by bluntly saying—

"It will do to cage with the other animal we carry; then we may go back double-handed into the settlements, and set up for showmen, around the court-houses and gaols of Kentucky."

The threatening frown, which gathered on the brow of his father, admonished the young man to forbear. Exchanging looks that were half rebellious with his brethren, he saw fit to be silent. But instead of observing the caution recommended by Abiram, they proceeded in a body, until they again came to a halt within a few yards of the matted cover of the thicket.

The scene had now, indeed, become wild and striking enough to have produced a powerful effect on minds better prepared, than those of the unnurtured family of the squatter, to resist the impressions of so exciting a spectacle. The heavens were, as usual at the season, covered with dark, driving clouds, beneath which interminable flocks of aquatic birds were again on the wing, holding their toilsome and heavy way towards the distant waters of the south. The wind had risen, and was once more sweeping over the prairie in

gusts, which it was often vain to oppose; and then again the blasts would seem to mount into the upper air, as if to sport with the drifting vapour, whirling and rolling vast masses of the dusky and ragged volumes over each other, in a terrific and yet grand disorder. Above the little brake, the flocks of birds still held their flight, circling with heavy wings about the spot, struggling at times against the torrent of wind, and then favoured by their position and height, making bold swoops upon the thicket, away from which, however, they never failed to sail, screaming in terror, as if apprised, either by sight or instinct, that the hour of their voracious dominion had not yet fully arrived.

Ishmael stood for many minutes, with his wife and children clustered together, in an amazement, with which awe was singularly mingled, gazing in death-like stillness on the sight. The voice of Esther at length broke the charm, and reminded the spectators of the necessity of resolving their doubts in some manner more worthy of their manhood, than by dull and inactive observation.

“Call in the dogs!” she said; “call in the hounds, and put them into the thicket; there ar’ men enough of ye, if ye have not lost the spirit with which I know ye were born, to tame the tempers of all the bears west of the big river. Call in the dogs, I say, you Enoch! Abner! Gabriell! has wonder made ye deaf?”

One of the young men complied; and having succeeded in detaching the hounds from the place, around which, until then, they had not ceased to hover, he led them down to the margin of the thicket.

“Put them in, boy; put them in,” continued the woman; “and you, Ishmael and Abiram, if any thing wicked or hurtful comes forth, show them the use of your rifles, like frontier-men. If ye ar’ wanting in spirit, before the eyes of my children will I put ye both to shame!”

The youths who, until now, had detained the hounds, let slip the thongs of skin, by which they had been held, and urged them to the attack by their voices. But, it would seem, that the elder dog was restrained by some extraordinary sensation, or that he was much too experienced to attempt the rash adventure. After proceeding a few yards to the very verge of the brake, he made a sudden pause, and stood trembling in all his aged limbs, apparently as unable to recede as to advance. The encouraging calls of the young men were disregarded, or only answered by a low and plaintive whining. For a minute the pup also was similarly affected; but less sage, or more easily excited, he was induced at length to leap forward, and finally to dash into the cover. An alarmed and startling howl was heard, and, at the next minute, he broke out of the thicket, and commenced circling the spot, in the same wild and unsteady manner as before.

“Have I a man among my children?” demanded Esther. “Give me a truer piece than a childish shotgun, and I will show ye what the courage of a frontier-woman can do!”

“Stay, mother,” exclaimed Abner and Enoch; “if you will see the creatur’, let us drive it into view.”

This was quite as much as the youths were accustomed to utter, even on more important occasions, but having given a pledge of their intentions, they were far from being backward in redeeming it. Preparing their arms with the utmost care, they advanced with steadiness to the brake. Nerves less often tried than those of the young borderers might have shrunk before the dangers of so uncertain an undertaking. As they proceeded, the howls of the dogs became more shrill and plaintive. The vultures and buzzards settled so low as to flap the bushes with their heavy wings, and the wind came hoarsely sweeping along the naked prairie, as if the spirits of the air had also descended to witness the approaching development.

There was a breathless moment, when the blood of the undaunted Esther flowed backward to her heart, as she saw her sons push aside the matted branches of the thicket and bury themselves in its labyrinth. A deep and solemn pause succeeded. Then arose two loud and piercing cries, in quick succession, which were followed by a quiet, still more awful and appalling.

“Come back, come back, my children!” cried the woman, the feelings of a mother getting the ascendancy.

But her voice was hushed, and every faculty seemed frozen with horror, as at that instant the bushes once more parted, and the two adventurers re-appeared, pale, and nearly insensible themselves, and laid at her feet the stiff and motionless body of the lost Asa, with the marks of a violent death but too plainly stamped on every pallid lineament.

The dogs uttered a long and closing howl, and then breaking off together, they disappeared on the forsaken trail of the deer. The flight of birds wheeled upward into the heavens, filling the air with their complaints at having been robbed of a victim which, frightful and disgusting as it was, still bore too much of the impression of humanity to become the prey of their obscene appetites.

## CHAPTER XIII

A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,  
For,—and a shrouding sheet:  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

—Song in Hamlet.

“Stand back! stand off, the whole of ye!” said Esther hoarsely to the crowd, which pressed too closely on the corpse; “I am his mother, and my right is better than that of ye all! Who has done this? Tell me, Ishmael, Abiram, Abner! open your mouths and your hearts, and let God’s truth and no other issue from them. Who has done this bloody deed?”

Her husband made no reply, but stood, leaning on his rifle, looking sadly, but with an unaltered eye, at the mangled remains of his son. Not so the mother, she threw herself on the earth, and receiving the cold and ghastly head into her lap, she sat contemplating those muscular features, on which the death-agony was still horridly impressed, in a silence far more expressive than any language of lamentation could have proved.

The voice of the woman was frozen in grief. In vain Ishmael attempted a few words of rude consolation; she neither listened nor answered. Her sons gathered about her in a circle, and expressed, after their uncouth manner, their sympathy in her sorrow, as well as their sense of their own loss, but she motioned them away, impatiently with her hand. At times her fingers played in the matted hair of the dead, and at others they lightly attempted to smooth the painfully expressive muscles of its ghastly visage, as the hand of the mother is seen lingering fondly about the features of her sleeping child. Then starting from their revolting office, her hands would flutter around her, and seem to seek some fruitless remedy against the violent blow, which had thus suddenly destroyed the child in whom she had not only placed her greatest hopes, but so much of her maternal pride. While engaged in the latter incomprehensible manner, the lethargic Abner turned aside, and swallowing the unwonted emotions which were rising in his own throat, he observed—

“Mother means that we should look for the signs, that we may know in what manner Asa has come by his end.”

“We owe it to the accursed Siouxes!” answered Ishmael: “twice have they put me deeply in their debt! The third time, the score shall be cleared!”

But, not content with this plausible explanation, and, perhaps, secretly glad to avert their eyes from a spectacle which awakened so extraordinary and unusual sensations in their sluggish bosoms, the sons of the squatter turned away in a body from their mother and the corpse, and proceeded to make the enquiries which they fancied the former had so repeatedly demanded. Ishmael made no objections; but, though he accompanied his children while they proceeded in the investigation, it was more with the appearance of complying with their wishes, at a time when resistance might not be seemly, than with any visible interest in the result. As the borderers, notwithstanding their usual dullness, were well instructed in most things connected with their habits of life, an enquiry, the success of which depended so much on signs and evidences that bore so strong a resemblance to a forest trail, was likely to be conducted with skill and acuteness. Accordingly, they proceeded to the melancholy task with great readiness and intelligence.

Abner and Enoch agreed in their accounts as to the position in which they had found the body. It was seated nearly upright, the back supported by a mass of matted brush, and one hand still grasping a broken twig of the alders. It was most probably owing to the former circumstance that the body had escaped the rapacity of the carrion birds, which had been seen hovering above the thicket, and the latter proved that life had not yet entirely abandoned the hapless victim when he entered the brake. The opinion now became general, that the youth had received his death-wound in the open prairie, and had dragged his enfeebled form into the cover of the thicket for the purpose of concealment. A trail through the bushes confirmed this opinion. It also appeared, on examination, that a desperate struggle had taken place on the very margin of the thicket. This was sufficiently apparent by the trodden branches, the deep impressions on the moist ground, and the lavish flow of blood.

“He has been shot in the open ground and come here for a cover,” said Abiram; “these marks would clearly prove it. The boy has been set upon by the savages in a body, and has fou’t like a hero as he was, until they have mastered his strength, and then drawn him to the bushes.”

To this probable opinion there was now but one dissenting voice, that of the slow-minded Ishmael, who demanded that the corpse itself should be examined in order to obtain a more accurate knowledge of its injuries. On examination, it appeared that a rifle bullet had passed directly through the body of the deceased, entering beneath one of his brawny shoulders, and making its exit by the breast. It required some knowledge in gun-shot wounds to decide this delicate point, but the experience of the borderers was quite equal to the scrutiny; and a smile of wild, and certainly of singular satisfaction, passed among the sons of Ishmael, when Abner confidently announced that the enemies of Asa had assailed him in the rear.

“It must be so,” said the gloomy but attentive squatter. “He was of too good a stock and too well trained, knowingly to turn the weak side to man or beast! Remember, boys, that while the front of manhood is to your enemy, let him be who or what he may, you ar’ safe from cowardly surprise. Why, Eester, woman! you ar’ getting beside yourself; with picking at the hair and the garments of the child! Little good can you do him now, old girl.”

“See!” interrupted Enoch, extricating from the fragments of cloth the morsel of lead which had prostrated the strength of one so powerful; “here is the very bullet!”

Ishmael took it in his hand and eyed it long and closely.

“There’s no mistake,” at length he muttered through his compressed teeth. “It is from the pouch of that accursed trapper. Like many of the hunters he has a mark in his mould, in order to know the work his rifle performs; and here you see it plainly—six little holes,

laid crossways."

"I'll swear to it!" cried Abiram, triumphantly. "He show'd me his private mark, himself, and boasted of the number of deer he had laid upon the prairies with these very bullets! Now, Ishmael, will you believe me when I tell you the old knave is a spy of the red-skins?"

The lead passed from the hand of one to that of another, and unfortunately for the reputation of the old man, several among them remembered also to have seen the aforesaid private bullet-marks, during the curious examination which all had made of his accoutrements. In addition to this wound, however, were many others of a less dangerous nature, all of which were supposed to confirm the supposed guilt of the trapper.

The traces of many different struggles were to be seen, between the spot where the first blood was spilt and the thicket to which it was now generally believed Asa had retreated, as a place of refuge. These were interpreted into so many proofs of the weakness of the murderer, who would have sooner despatched his victim, had not even the dying strength of the youth rendered him formidable to the infirmities of one so old. The danger of drawing some others of the hunters to the spot, by repeated firing, was deemed a sufficient reason for not again resorting to the rifle, after it had performed the important duty of disabling the victim. The weapon of the dead man was not to be found, and had doubtless, together with many other less valuable and lighter articles, that he was accustomed to carry about his person, become a prize to his destroyer.

But what, in addition to the tell-tale bullet, appeared to fix the ruthless deed with peculiar certainty on the trapper, was the accumulated evidence furnished by the trail; which proved, notwithstanding his deadly hurt, that the wounded man had still been able to make a long and desperate resistance to the subsequent efforts of his murderer. Ishmael seemed to press this proof with a singular mixture of sorrow and pride: sorrow, at the loss of a son, whom in their moments of amity he highly valued; and pride, at the courage and power he had manifested to his last and weakest breath.

"He died as a son of mine should die," said the squatter, gleaned a hollow consolation from so unnatural an exultation: "a dread to his enemy to the last, and without help from the law! Come, children; we have the grave to make, and then to hunt his murderer."

The sons of the squatter set about their melancholy office, in silence and in sadness. An excavation was made in the hard earth, at a great expense of toil and time, and the body was wrapped in such spare vestments as could be collected among the labourers. When these arrangements were completed, Ishmael approached the seemingly unconscious Esther, and announced his intention to inter the dead. She heard him, and quietly relinquished her grasp of the corpse, rising in silence to follow it to its narrow resting place. Here she seated herself again at the head of the grave, watching each movement of the youths with eager and jealous eyes. When a sufficiency of earth was laid upon the senseless clay of Asa, to protect it from injury, Enoch and Abner entered the cavity, and trode it into a solid mass, by the weight of their huge frames, with an appearance of a strange, not to say savage, mixture of care and indifference. This well-known precaution was adopted to prevent the speedy exhumation of the body by some of the carnivorous beasts of the prairie, whose instinct was sure to guide them to the spot. Even the rapacious birds appeared to comprehend the nature of the ceremony, for, mysteriously apprised that the miserable victim was now about to be abandoned by the human race, they once more began to make their airy circuits above the place, screaming, as if to frighten the kinsmen from their labour of caution and love.

Ishmael stood, with folded arms, steadily watching the manner in which this necessary duty was performed, and when the whole was completed, he lifted his cap to his sons, to thank them for their services, with a dignity that would have become one much better nurtured. Throughout the whole of a ceremony, which is ever solemn and admonitory, the squatter had maintained a grave and serious deportment. His vast features were visibly stamped with an expression of deep concern; but at no time did they falter, until he turned his back, as he believed for ever, on the grave of his first-born. Nature was then stirring powerfully within him, and the muscles of his stern visage began to work perceptibly. His children fastened their eyes on his, as if to seek a direction to the strange emotions which were moving their own heavy natures, when the struggle in the bosom of the squatter suddenly ceased, and, taking his wife by the arm, he raised her to her feet as if she had been an infant, saying, in a voice that was perfectly steady, though a nice observer would have discovered that it was kinder than usual—

"Eester, we have now done all that man and woman can do. We raised the boy, and made him such as few others were like, on the frontiers of America; and we have given him a grave. Let us go our way."

The woman turned her eyes slowly from the fresh earth, and laying her hands on the shoulders of her husband, stood, looking him anxiously in the eyes.

"Ishmael! Ishmael!" she said, "you parted from the boy in your wrath!"

"May the Lord pardon his sins freely as I have forgiven his worst misdeeds!" calmly returned the squatter: "woman, go you back to the rock and read your Bible; a chapter in that book always does you good. You can read, Eester; which is a privilege I never did enjoy."

"Yes, yes," muttered the woman, yielding to his strength, and suffering herself to be led, though with strong reluctance from the spot. "I can read; and how have I used the knowledge! But he, Ishmael, he has not the sin of wasted l'arning to answer for. We have spared him that, at least! whether it be in mercy, or in cruelty, I know not."

Her husband made no reply, but continued steadily to lead her in the direction of their temporary abode. When they reached the summit of the swell of land, which they knew was the last spot from which the situation of the grave of Asa could be seen, they all turned, as by common concurrence, to take a farewell view of the place. The little mound itself was not visible; but it was frightfully indicated by the flock of screaming birds which hovered above. In the opposite direction a low, blue hillock, in the skirts of the horizon, pointed out the place where Esther had left the rest of her young, and served as an attraction to draw her reluctant steps from the last abode of her eldest born. Nature quickened in the bosom of the mother at the sight; and she finally yielded the rights of the dead, to the more urgent claims of the living.

The foregoing occurrences had struck a spark from the stern tempers of a set of beings so singularly moulded in the habits of their

uncultivated lives, which served to keep alive among them the dying embers of family affection. United to their parents by ties no stronger than those which use had created, there had been great danger, as Ishmael had foreseen, that the overloaded hive would swarm, and leave him saddled with the difficulties of a young and helpless brood, unsupported by the exertions of those, whom he had already brought to a state of maturity. The spirit of insubordination, which emanated from the unfortunate Asa, had spread among his juniors; and the squatter had been made painfully to remember the time when, in the wantonness of his youth and vigour, he had, reversing the order of the brutes, cast off his own aged and failing parents, to enter into the world unshackled and free. But the danger had now abated, for a time at least; and if his authority was not restored with all its former influence, it was admitted to exist, and to maintain its ascendancy a little longer.

It is true that his slow-minded sons, even while they submitted to the impressions of the recent event, had glimmerings of terrible distrusts, as to the manner in which their elder brother had met with his death. There were faint and indistinct images in the minds of two or three of the oldest, which portrayed the father himself, as ready to imitate the example of Abraham, without the justification of the sacred authority which commanded the holy man to attempt the revolting office. But then, these images were so transient, and so much obscured in intellectual mists, as to leave no very strong impressions, and the tendency of the whole transaction, as we have already said, was rather to strengthen than to weaken the authority of Ishmael.

In this disposition of mind, the party continued their route towards the place whence they had that morning issued on a search which had been crowned with so melancholy a success. The long and fruitless march which they had made under the direction of Abiram, the discovery of the body, and its subsequent interment, had so far consumed the day, that by the time their steps were retraced across the broad track of waste which lay between the grave of Asa and the rock, the sun had fallen far below his meridian altitude. The hill had gradually risen as they approached, like some tower emerging from the bosom of the sea, and when within a mile, the minuter objects that crowned its height came dimly into view.

"It will be a sad meeting for the girls!" said Ishmael, who, from time to time, did not cease to utter something which he intended should be consolatory to the bruised spirit of his partner. "Asa was much regarded by all the young; and seldom failed to bring in from his hunts something that they loved."

"He did, he did," murmured Esther; "the boy was the pride of the family. My other children are as nothing to him!"

"Say not so, good woman," returned the father, glancing his eye a little proudly at the athletic train which followed, at no great distance, in the rear. "Say not so, old Eester, for few fathers and mothers have greater reason to be boastful than ourselves."

"Thankful, thankful," muttered the humbled woman; "ye mean thankful, Ishmael!"

"Then thankful let it be, if you like the word better, my good girl,—but what has become of Nelly and the young? The child has forgotten the charge I gave her, and has not only suffered the children to sleep, but, I warrant you, is dreaming of the fields of Tennessee at this very moment. The mind of your niece is mainly fixed on the settlements, I reckon."

"Ay, she is not for us; I said it, and thought it, when I took her, because death had stripped her of all other friends. Death is a sad worker in the bosom of families, Ishmael! Asa had a kind feeling to the child, and they might have come one day into our places, had things been so ordered."

"Nay, she is not gifted for a frontier wife, if this is the manner she is to keep house while the husband is on the hunt. Abner, let off your rifle, that they may know we ar' coming. I fear Nelly and the young ar' asleep." The young man complied with an alacrity that manifested how gladly he would see the rounded, active figure of Ellen, enlivening the ragged summit of the rock. But the report was succeeded by neither signal nor answer of any sort. For a moment, the whole party stood in suspense, awaiting the result, and then a simultaneous impulse caused the whole to let off their pieces at the same instant, producing a noise which might not fail to reach the ears of all within so short a distance.

"Ah! there they come at last!" cried Abiram, who was usually among the first to seize on any circumstance which promised relief from disagreeable apprehensions.

"It is a petticoat fluttering on the line," said Esther; "I put it there myself."

"You ar' right; but now she comes; the jade has been taking her comfort in the tent!"

"It is not so," said Ishmael, whose usually inflexible features were beginning to manifest the uneasiness he felt. "It is the tent itself blowing about loosely in the wind. They have loosened the bottom, like silly children as they ar', and unless care is had, the whole will come down!"

The words were scarcely uttered before a rushing blast of wind swept by the spot where they stood, raising the dust in little eddies, in its progress; and then, as if guided by a master hand, it quitted the earth, and mounted to the precise spot on which all eyes were just then riveted. The loosened linen felt its influence and tottered; but regained its poise, and, for a moment, it became tranquil. The cloud of leaves next played in circling revolutions around the place, and then descended with the velocity of a swooping hawk, and sailed away into the prairie in long straight lines, like a flight of swallows resting on their expanded wings. They were followed for some distance by the snow-white tent, which, however, soon fell behind the rock, leaving its highest peak as naked as when it lay in the entire solitude of the desert.

"The murderers have been here!" moaned Esther. "My babes! my babes!"

For a moment even Ishmael faltered before the weight of so unexpected a blow. But shaking himself, like an awakened lion, he sprang forward, and pushing aside the impediments of the barrier, as if they had been feathers, he rushed up the ascent with an impetuosity which proved how formidable a sluggish nature may become, when thoroughly aroused.



## CHAPTER XIV

whose party do the townsmen yet admit?  
—King John.

In order to preserve an even pace between the incidents of the tale, it becomes necessary to revert to such events as occurred during the ward of Ellen Wade.

For the few first hours, the cares of the honest and warm-hearted girl were confined to the simple offices of satisfying the often-repeated demands which her younger associates made on her time and patience, under the pretences of hunger, thirst, and all the other ceaseless wants of captious and inconsiderate childhood. She had seized a moment from their importunities to steal into the tent, where she was administering to the comforts of one far more deserving of her tenderness, when an outcry among the children recalled her to the duties she had momentarily forgotten.

“See, Nelly, see!” exclaimed half a dozen eager voices; “yonder ar’ men; and Phoebe says that they ar’ Sioux-Indians!”

Ellen turned her eyes in the direction in which so many arms were already extended, and, to her consternation, beheld several men, advancing manifestly and swiftly in a straight line towards the rock. She counted four, but was unable to make out any thing concerning their characters, except that they were not any of those who of right were entitled to admission into the fortress. It was a fearful moment for Ellen. Looking around, at the juvenile and frightened flock that pressed upon the skirts of her garments, she endeavoured to recall to her confused faculties some one of the many tales of female heroism, with which the history of the western frontier abounded. In one, a stockade had been successfully defended by a single man, supported by three or four women, for days, against the assaults of a hundred enemies. In another, the women alone had been able to protect the children, and the less valuable effects of their absent husbands; and a third was not wanting, in which a solitary female had destroyed her sleeping captors and given liberty not only to herself, but to a brood of helpless young. This was the case most nearly assimilated to the situation in which Ellen now found herself; and, with flushing cheeks and kindling eyes, the girl began to consider, and to prepare her slender means of defence.

She posted the larger girls at the little levers that were to cast the rocks on the assailants, the smaller were to be used more for show than any positive service they could perform, while, like any other leader, she reserved her own person, as a superintendent and encourager of the whole. When these dispositions were made, she endeavoured to await the issue, with an air of composure, that she intended should inspire her assistants with the confidence necessary to ensure success.

Although Ellen was vastly their superior in that spirit which emanates from moral qualities, she was by no means the equal of the two eldest daughters of Esther, in the important military property of insensibility to danger. Reared in the hardihood of a migrating life, on the skirts of society, where they had become familiarised to the sights and dangers of the wilderness, these girls promised fairly to become, at some future day, no less distinguished than their mother for daring, and for that singular mixture of good and evil, which, in a wider sphere of action, would probably have enabled the wife of the squatter to enrol her name among the remarkable females of her time. Esther had already, on one occasion, made good the log tenement of Ishmael against an inroad of savages; and on another, she had been left for dead by her enemies, after a defence that, with a more civilised foe, would have entitled her to the honours of a liberal capitulation. These facts, and sundry others of a similar nature, had often been recapitulated with suitable exultation in the presence of her daughters, and the bosoms of the young Amazons were now strangely fluctuating between natural terror and the ambitious wish to do something that might render them worthy of being the children of such a mother. It appeared that the opportunity for distinction, of this wild character, was no longer to be denied them.

The party of strangers was already within a hundred rods of the rock. Either consulting their usual wary method of advancing, or admonished by the threatening attitudes of two figures, who had thrust forth the barrels of as many old muskets from behind the stone entrenchment, the new comers halted, under favour of an inequality in the ground, where a growth of grass thicker than common offered the advantage of concealment. From this spot they reconnoitred the fortress for several anxious, and to Ellen, interminable minutes. Then one advanced singly, and apparently more in the character of a herald than of an assailant.

“Phoebe, do you fire,” and “no, Hetty, you,” were beginning to be heard between the half-frightened and yet eager daughters of the squatter, when Ellen probably saved the advancing stranger from some imminent alarm, if from no greater danger, by exclaiming—

“Lay down the muskets; it is Dr. Battius!”

Her subordinates so far complied, as to withdraw their hands from the locks, though the threatening barrels still maintained the portentous levels. The naturalist, who had advanced with sufficient deliberation to note the smallest hostile demonstration of the garrison, now raised a white handkerchief on the end of his fusée, and came within speaking distance of the fortress. Then, assuming what he intended should be an imposing and dignified semblance of authority, he blustered forth, in a voice that might have been heard at a much greater distance—

“What, ho! I summon ye all, in the name of the Confederacy of the United Sovereign States of North America, to submit yourselves to the laws.”

“Doctor or no Doctor; he is an enemy, Nelly; hear him! hear him! he talks of the law.”

“Stop! stay till I hear his answer!” said the nearly breathless Ellen, pushing aside the dangerous weapons which were again pointed in the direction of the shrinking person of the herald.

“I admonish and forewarn ye all,” continued the startled Doctor, “that I am a peaceful citizen of the before named Confederacy, or to

speak with greater accuracy, Union, a supporter of the Social Compact, and a lover of good order and amity;" then, perceiving that the danger was, at least, temporarily removed, he once more raised his voice to the hostile pitch,—“I charge ye all, therefore, to submit to the laws.”

“I thought you were a friend,” Ellen replied; “and that you travelled with my uncle, in virtue of an agreement—”

“It is void! I have been deceived in the very premises, and, I hereby pronounce, a certain compactum, entered into and concluded between Ishmael Bush, squatter, and Obed Battius, M.D., to be incontinently null and of non-effect. Nay, children, to be null is merely a negative property, and is fraught with no evil to your worthy parent; so lay aside the fire-arms, and listen to the admonitions of reason. I declare it vicious—null—abrogated. As for thee, Nelly, my feelings towards thee are not at all given to hostility; therefore listen to that which I have to utter, nor turn away thine ears in the wantonness of security. Thou knowest the character of the man with whom thou dwellest, young woman, and thou also knowest the danger of being found in evil company. Abandon, then, the trifling advantages of thy situation, and yield the rock peaceably to the will of those who accompany me—a legion, young woman—I do assure you an invincible and powerful legion! Render, therefore, the effects of this lawless and wicked squatter,—nay, children, such disregard of human life, is frightful in those who have so recently received the gift, in their own persons! Point those dangerous weapons aside, I entreat of you; more for your own sakes, than for mine. Hetty, hast thou forgotten who appeased thine anguish when thy auricular nerves were tortured by the colds and damps of the naked earth! and thou, Phoebe, ungrateful and forgetful Phoebe! but for this very arm, which you would prostrate with an endless paralysis, thy incisores would still be giving thee pain and sorrow! Lay, then, aside thy weapons, and hearken to the advice of one who has always been thy friend. And now, young woman,” still keeping a jealous eye on the muskets which the girl had suffered to be diverted a little from their aim,—“and now, young woman, for the last, and therefore the most solemn asking: I demand of thee the surrender of this rock, without delay or resistance, in the joint names of power, of justice, and of the—” law he would have added; but recollecting that this ominous word would again provoke the hostility of the squatter's children, he succeeded in swallowing it in good season, and concluded with the less dangerous and more convertible term of “reason.”

This extraordinary summons failed, however, of producing the desired effect. It proved utterly unintelligible to his younger listeners, with the exception of the few offensive terms, already sufficiently distinguished, and though Ellen better comprehended the meaning of the herald, she appeared as little moved by his rhetoric as her companions. At those passages which he intended should be tender and affecting, the intelligent girl, though tortured by painful feelings, had even manifested a disposition to laugh, while to the threats she turned an utterly insensible ear.

“I know not the meaning of all you wish to say, Dr. Battius,” she quietly replied, when he had ended; “but I am sure if it would teach me to betray my trust, it is what I ought not to hear. I caution you to attempt no violence, for let my wishes be what they may, you see I am surrounded by a force that can easily put me down, and you know, or ought to know, too well the temper of this family, to trifle in such a matter with any of its members, let them be of what sex or age they may.”

“I am not entirely ignorant of human character,” returned the naturalist, prudently receding a little from the position, which he had, until now, stoutly maintained at the very base of the hill. “But here comes one who may know its secret windings still better than I.”

“Ellen! Ellen Wade,” cried Paul Hover, who had advanced to his elbow, without betraying any of that sensitiveness which had so manifestly discomposed the Doctor; “I didn't expect to find an enemy in you!”

“Nor shall you, when you ask that, which I can grant without treachery. You know that my uncle has trusted his family to my care, and shall I so far betray the trust as to let in his bitterest enemies to murder his children, perhaps, and to rob him of the little which the Indians have left?”

“Am I a murderer—is this old man—this officer of the States,” pointing to the trapper and his newly discovered friend, both of whom by this time stood at his side, “is either of these likely to do the things you name?”

“What is it then you ask of me?” said Ellen, wringing her hands, in excessive doubt.

“The beast! nothing more nor less than the squatter's hidden, ravenous, dangerous beast!”

“Excellent young woman,” commenced the young stranger, who had so lately joined himself to the party on the prairie—but his mouth was immediately stopped by a significant sign from the trapper, who whispered in his ear—

“Let the lad be our spokesman. Natur' will work in the bosom of the child, and we shall gain our object, in good time.”

“The whole truth is out, Ellen,” Paul continued, “and we have lined the squatter into his most secret misdoings. We have come to right the wronged and to free the imprisoned; now, if you are the girl of a true heart, as I have always believed, so far from throwing straws in our way, you will join in the general swarming, and leave old Ishmael and his hive to the bees of his own breed.”

“I have sworn a solemn oath—”

“A compactum which is entered into through ignorance, or in duress, is null in the sight of all good moralists,” cried the Doctor.

“Hush, hush,” again the trapper whispered; “leave it all to natur' and the lad!”

“I have sworn in the sight and by the name of Him who is the founder and ruler of all that is good, whether it be in morals or in religion,” Ellen continued, “neither to reveal the contents of that tent, nor to help its prisoner to escape. We are both solemnly, terribly, sworn; our lives perhaps have been the gift we received for the promises. It is true you are masters of the secret, but not through any means of ours; nor do I know that I can justify myself, for even being neutral, while you attempt to invade the dwelling of my uncle in this hostile manner.”

“I can prove beyond the power of refutation,” the naturalist eagerly exclaimed, “by Paley, Berkeley, ay, even by the immortal Binkerschoek, that a compactum, concluded while one of the parties, be it a state or be it an individual, is in durance—”

“You will ruffle the temper of the child, with your abusive language,” said the cautious trapper, “while the lad, if left to human feelings, will bring her down to the meekness of a fawn. Ah! you are like myself, little knowing in the natur' of hidden kindnesses!”

"Is this the only vow you have taken, Ellen?" Paul continued in a tone which, for the gay, light-hearted bee-hunter, sounded dolorous and reproachful. "Have you sworn only to this? are the words which the squatter says, to be as honey in your mouth, and all other promises like so much useless comb?"

The paleness, which had taken possession of the usually cheerful countenance of Ellen, was hid in a bright glow, that was plainly visible even at the distance at which she stood. She hesitated a moment, as if struggling to repress something very like resentment, before she answered with all her native spirit—

"I know not what right any one has to question me about oaths and promises, which can only concern her who has made them, if, indeed, any of the sort you mention have ever been made at all. I shall hold no further discourse with one who thinks so much of himself, and takes advice merely of his own feelings."

"Now, old trapper, do you hear that!" said the unsophisticated bee-hunter, turning abruptly to his aged friend. "The meanest insect that skims the heavens, when it has got its load, flies straight and honestly to its nest or hive, according to its kind; but the ways of a woman's mind are as knotty as a gnarled oak, and more crooked than the windings of the Mississippi!"

"Nay, nay, child," said the trapper, good-naturedly interfering in behalf of the offending Paul, "you are to consider that youth is hasty, and not overgiven to thought. But then a promise is a promise, and not to be thrown aside and forgotten, like the hoofs and horns of a buffalo."

"I thank you for reminding me of my oath," said the still resentful Ellen, biting her pretty nether lip with vexation; "I might else have proved forgetful!"

"Ah! female nature is awakened in her," said the old man, shaking his head in a manner to show how much he was disappointed in the result; "but it manifests itself against the true spirit!"

"Ellen!" cried the young stranger, who until now had been an attentive listener to the parley, "since Ellen is the name by which you are known—"

"They often add to it another. I am sometimes called by the name of my father."

"Call her Nelly Wade at once," muttered Paul; "it is her rightful name, and I care not if she keeps it for ever!"

"Wade, I should have added," continued the youth. "You will acknowledge that, though bound by no oath myself, I at least have known how to respect those of others. You are a witness yourself that I have forborne to utter a single call, while I am certain it could reach those ears it would gladden so much. Permit me then to ascend the rock, singly; I promise a perfect indemnity to your kinsman, against any injury his effects may sustain."

Ellen seemed to hesitate, but catching a glimpse of Paul, who stood leaning proudly on his rifle, whistling, with an appearance of the utmost indifference, the air of a boating song, she recovered her recollection in time to answer,—

"I have been left the captain of the rock, while my uncle and his sons hunt, and captain will I remain till he returns to receive back the charge."

"This is wasting moments that will not soon return, and neglecting an opportunity that may never occur again," the young soldier gravely remarked. "The sun is beginning to fall already, and many minutes cannot elapse before the squatter and his savage brood will be returning to their huts."

Doctor Battius cast a glance behind him, and took up the discourse, by saying—

"Perfection is always found in maturity, whether it be in the animal or in the intellectual world. Reflection is the mother of wisdom, and wisdom the parent of success. I propose that we retire to a discreet distance from this impregnable position, and there hold a convocation, or council, to deliberate on what manner we may sit down regularly before the place; or, perhaps, by postponing the siege to another season, gain the aid of auxiliaries from the inhabited countries, and thus secure the dignity of the laws from any danger of a repulse."

"A storm would be better," the soldier smilingly answered, measuring the height and scanning all its difficulties with a deliberate eye; "twould be but a broken arm or a bruised head at the worst."

"Then have at it!" shouted the impetuous bee-hunter, making a spring that at once put him out of danger from shot, by carrying him beneath the projecting ledge on which the garrison was posted; "now do your worst, young devils of a wicked breed; you have but a moment to work your mischief!"

"Paul! rash Paul!" shrieked Ellen; "another step and the rocks will crush you! they hang by but a thread, and these girls are ready and willing to let them fall!"

"Then drive the accursed swarm from the hive; for scale the rock I will, though I find it covered with hornets."

"Let her if she dare!" tauntingly cried the eldest of the girls, brandishing a musket with a mien and resolution that would have done credit to her Amazonian dam. "I know you, Nelly Wade; you are with the lawyers in your heart, and if you come a foot nigher, you shall have frontier punishment. Put in another pry, girls; in with it! I should like to see the man, of them all, that dare come up into the camp of Ishmael Bush, without asking leave of his children!"

"Stir not, Paul; for your life keep beneath the rock!"

Ellen was interrupted by the same bright vision, which on the preceding day had stayed another scarcely less portentous tumult, by exhibiting itself on the same giddy height, where it was now seen.

"In the name of Him, who commandeth all, I implore you to pause—both you, who so madly incur the risk, and you, who so rashly offer to take that which you never can return!" said a voice, in a slightly foreign accent, that instantly drew all eyes upward.

"Inez!" cried the officer, "do I again see you! mine shall you now be, though a million devils were posted on this rock. Push up, brave woodsman, and give room for another!"

The sudden appearance of the figure from the tent had created a momentary stupor among the defendants of the rock, which might, with suitable forbearance, have been happily improved; but startled by the voice of Middleton, the surprised Phoebe discharged her musket at the female, scarcely knowing whether she aimed at the life of a mortal or at some being which belonged to another world. Ellen uttered a cry of horror, and then sprang after her alarmed or wounded friend, she knew not which, into the tent.

During this moment of dangerous by-play, the sounds of a serious attack were very distinctly audible beneath. Paul had profited by the commotion over his head to change his place so far, as to make room for Middleton. The latter was followed by the naturalist, who, in a state of mental aberration, produced by the report of the musket, had instinctively rushed towards the rocks for cover. The trapper remained where he was last seen, an unmoved but close observer of the several proceedings. Though averse to enter into actual hostilities, the old man was, however, far from being useless. Favoured by his position, he was enabled to apprise his friends of the movements of those who plotted their destruction above, and to advise and control their advance accordingly.

In the mean time, the children of Esther were true to the spirit they had inherited from their redoubtable mother. The instant they found themselves delivered from the presence of Ellen and her unknown companion, they bestowed an undivided attention on their more masculine and certainly more dangerous assailants, who by this time had made a complete lodgment among the crags of the citadel. The repeated summons to surrender, which Paul uttered in a voice that he intended should strike terror in their young bosoms, were as little heeded as were the calls of the trapper to abandon a resistance, which might prove fatal to some among them, without offering the smallest probability of eventual success. Encouraging each other to persevere, they poised the fragments of rocks, prepared the lighter missiles for immediate service, and thrust forward the barrels of the muskets with a business-like air, and a coolness, that would have done credit to men practised in warfare.

"Keep under the ledge," said the trapper, pointing out to Paul the manner in which he should proceed; "keep in your foot more, lad—ah! you see the warning was not amiss! had the stone struck it, the bees would have had the prairies to themselves. Now, namesake of my friend; Uncas, in name and spirit! now, if you have the activity of *Le Cerf Agile*, you may make a far leap to the right, and gain twenty feet, without danger. Beware the bush—beware the bush! 'twill prove a treacherous hold! Ah! he has done it; safely and bravely has he done it! Your turn comes next, friend; that follows the fruits of nature'. Push you to the left, and divide the attention of the children. Nay, girls, fire,—my old ears are used to the whistling of lead; and little reason have I to prove a doe-heart, with fourscore years on my back." He shook his head with a melancholy smile, but without flinching in a muscle, as the bullet, which the exasperated Hetty fired, passed innocently at no great distance from the spot where he stood. "It is safer keeping in your track than dodging when a weak finger pulls the trigger," he continued "but it is a solemn sight to witness how much human nature is inclined to evil, in one so young! Well done, my man of beasts and plants! Another such leap, and you may laugh at all the squatter's bars and walls. The Doctor has got his temper up! I see it in his eye, and something good will come of him! Keep closer, man—keep closer."

The trapper, though he was not deceived as to the state of Dr. Battius' mind, was, however, greatly in error as to the exciting cause. While imitating the movements of his companions, and toiling his way upward with the utmost caution, and not without great inward tribulation, the eye of the naturalist had caught a glimpse of an unknown plant, a few yards above his head, and in a situation more than commonly exposed to the missiles which the girls were unceasingly hurling in the direction of the assailants. Forgetting, in an instant, every thing but the glory of being the first to give this jewel to the catalogues of science, he sprang upward at the prize with the avidity with which the sparrow darts upon the butterfly. The rocks, which instantly came thundering down, announced that he was seen; and for a moment, while his form was concealed in the cloud of dust and fragments which followed the furious descent, the trapper gave him up for lost; but the next instant he was seen safely seated in a cavity formed by some of the projecting stones which had yielded to the shock, holding triumphantly in his hand the captured stem, which he was already devouring with delighted, and certainly not unskilful, eyes. Paul profited by the opportunity. Turning his course, with the quickness of thought, he sprang to the post which Obed thus securely occupied, and unceremoniously making a footstool of his shoulder, as the latter stooped over his treasure, he bounded through the breach left by the fallen rock, and gained the level. He was followed by Middleton, who joined him in seizing and disarming the girls. In this manner a bloodless and complete victory was obtained over that citadel which Ishmael had vainly flattered himself might prove impregnable.

## CHAPTER XV

So smile the heavens upon this holy act,  
That after-hours with sorrow chide us not!  
—Shakspeare.

It is proper that the course of the narrative should be stayed, while we revert to those causes, which have brought in their train of consequences, the singular contest just related. The interruption must necessarily be as brief as we hope it may prove satisfactory to that class of readers, who require that no gap should be left by those who assume the office of historians, for their own fertile imaginations to fill.

Among the troops sent by the government of the United States, to take possession of its newly acquired territory in the west, was a detachment led by a young soldier who has become so busy an actor in the scenes of our legend. The mild and indolent descendants of the ancient colonists received their new compatriots without distrust, well knowing that the transfer raised them from the condition of subjects, to the more enviable distinction of citizens in a government of laws. The new rulers exercised their functions with discretion, and wielded their delegated authority without offence. In such a novel intermixture, however, of men born and nurtured in freedom, and the compliant minions of absolute power, the catholic and the protestant, the active and the indolent, some little time was necessary to blend the discrepant elements of society. In attaining so desirable an end, woman was made to perform her accustomed and grateful office. The barriers of prejudice and religion were broken through by the irresistible power of the master-passion, and family unions, ere long, began to cement the political tie which had made a forced conjunction, between people so opposite in their habits, their educations, and their opinions.

Middleton was among the first, of the new possessors of the soil, who became captive to the charms of a Louisianian lady. In the immediate vicinity of the post he had been directed to occupy, dwelt the chief of one of those ancient colonial families, which had been content to slumber for ages amid the ease, indolence, and wealth of the Spanish provinces. He was an officer of the crown, and had been induced to remove from the Floridas, among the French of the adjoining province, by a rich succession of which he had become the inheritor. The name of Don Augustin de Certavallos was scarcely known beyond the limits of the little town in which he resided, though he found a secret pleasure himself in pointing it out, in large scrolls of musty documents, to an only child, as enrolled among the former heroes and grandees of Old and of New Spain. This fact, so important to himself and of so little moment to any body else, was the principal reason, that while his more vivacious Gallic neighbours were not slow to open a frank communion with their visitors, he chose to keep aloof, seemingly content with the society of his daughter, who was a girl just emerging from the condition of childhood into that of a woman.

The curiosity of the youthful Inez, however, was not so inactive. She had not heard the martial music of the garrison, melting on the evening air, nor seen the strange banner, which fluttered over the heights that rose at no great distance from her father's extensive grounds, without experiencing some of those secret impulses which are thought to distinguish the sex. Natural timidity, and that retiring and perhaps peculiar lassitude, which forms the very groundwork of female fascination, in the tropical provinces of Spain, held her in their seemingly indissoluble bonds; and it is more than probable, that had not an accident occurred, in which Middleton was of some personal service to her father, so long a time would have elapsed before they met, that another direction might have been given to the wishes of one, who was just of an age to be alive to all the power of youth and beauty.

Providence—or if that imposing word is too just to be classical, fate—had otherwise decreed. The haughty and reserved Don Augustin was by far too observant of the forms of that station, on which he so much valued himself, to forget the duties of a gentleman. Gratitude, for the kindness of Middleton, induced him to open his doors to the officers of the garrison, and to admit of a guarded but polite intercourse. Reserve gradually gave way before the propriety and candour of their spirited young leader, and it was not long ere the affluent planter rejoiced as much as his daughter, whenever the well known signal, at the gate, announced one of these agreeable visits from the commander of the post.

It is unnecessary to dwell on the impression which the charms of Inez produced on the soldier, or to delay the tale in order to write a wire-drawn account of the progressive influence that elegance of deportment, manly beauty, and undivided assiduity and intelligence were likely to produce on the sensitive mind of a romantic, warm-hearted, and secluded girl of sixteen. It is sufficient for our purpose to say that they loved, that the youth was not backward to declare his feelings, that he prevailed with some facility over the scruples of the maiden, and with no little difficulty over the objections of her father, and that before the province of Louisiana had been six months in the possession of the States, the officer of the latter was the affianced husband of the richest heiress on the banks of the Mississippi.

Although we have presumed the reader to be acquainted with the manner in which such results are commonly attained, it is not to be supposed that the triumph of Middleton, either over the prejudices of the father or over those of the daughter, was achieved without difficulty. Religion formed a stubborn and nearly irremovable obstacle with both. The devoted man patiently submitted to a formidable essay, father Ignatius was deputed to make in order to convert him to the true faith. The effort on the part of the worthy priest was systematic, vigorous, and long sustained. A dozen times (it was at those moments when glimpses of the light, sylphlike form of Inez flitted like some fairy being past the scene of their conferences) the good father fancied he was on the eve of a glorious triumph over infidelity; but all his hopes were frustrated by some unlooked-for opposition, on the part of the subject of his pious labours. So long as the assault on his faith was distant and feeble, Middleton, who was no great proficient in polemics, submitted to its effects with the patience and humility of a martyr; but the moment the good father, who felt such concern in his future happiness, was tempted to improve his vantage ground by calling in the aid of some of the peculiar subtleties of his own creed, the young man was too good a soldier not to make head against the hot attack. He came to the contest, it is true, with no weapons more formidable than common

sense, and some little knowledge of the habits of his country as contrasted with that of his adversary; but with these homebred implements he never failed to repulse the father with something of the power with which a nervous cudgel player would deal with a skilful master of the rapier, setting at nought his passados by the direct and unanswerable arguments of a broken head and a shivered weapon.

Before the controversy was terminated, an inroad of Protestants had come to aid the soldier. The reckless freedom of such among them, as thought only of this life, and the consistent and tempered piety of others, caused the honest priest to look about him in concern. The influence of example on one hand, and the contamination of too free an intercourse on the other, began to manifest themselves, even in that portion of his own flock, which he had supposed to be too thoroughly folded in spiritual government ever to stray. It was time to turn his thoughts from the offensive, and to prepare his followers to resist the lawless deluge of opinion, which threatened to break down the barriers of their faith. Like a wise commander, who finds he has occupied too much ground for the amount of his force, he began to curtail his outworks. The relics were concealed from profane eyes; his people were admonished not to speak of miracles before a race that not only denied their existence, but who had even the desperate hardihood to challenge their proofs; and even the Bible itself was prohibited, with terrible denunciations, for the triumphant reason that it was liable to be misinterpreted.

In the mean time, it became necessary to report to Don Augustin, the effects his arguments and prayers had produced on the heretical disposition of the young soldier. No man is prone to confess his weakness, at the very moment when circumstances demand the utmost efforts of his strength. By a species of pious fraud, for which no doubt the worthy priest found his absolution in the purity of his motives, he declared that, while no positive change was actually wrought in the mind of Middleton, there was every reason to hope the entering wedge of argument had been driven to its head, and that in consequence an opening was left, through which, it might rationally be hoped, the blessed seeds of a religious fructification would find their way, especially if the subject was left uninterrupted to enjoy the advantage of catholic communion.

Don Augustin himself was now seized with the desire of proselyting. Even the soft and amiable Inez thought it would be a glorious consummation of her wishes, to be a humble instrument of bringing her lover into the bosom of the true church. The offers of Middleton were promptly accepted, and, while the father looked forward impatiently to the day assigned for the nuptials, as to the pledge of his own success, the daughter thought of it with feelings in which the holy emotions of her faith were blended with the softer sensations of her years and situation.

The sun rose, the morning of her nuptials, on a day so bright and cloudless, that Inez hailed it as a harbinger of future happiness. Father Ignatius performed the offices of the church, in a little chapel attached to the estate of Don Augustin; and long ere the sun had begun to fall, Middleton pressed the blushing and timid young Creole to his bosom, his acknowledged and unalienable wife. It had pleased the parties to pass the day of the wedding in retirement, dedicating it solely to the best and purest affections, aloof from the noisy and heartless rejoicings of a compelled festivity.

Middleton was returning through the grounds of Don Augustin, from a visit of duty to his encampment, at that hour in which the light of the sun begins to melt into the shadows of evening, when a glimpse of a robe, similar to that in which Inez had accompanied him to the altar, caught his eye through the foliage of a retired arbour. He approached the spot, with a delicacy that was rather increased than diminished by the claim she had perhaps given him to intrude on her private moments; but the sounds of her soft voice, which was offering up prayers, in which he heard himself named by the dearest of all appellations, overcame his scruples, and induced him to take a position where he might listen without the fear of detection. It was certainly grateful to the feelings of a husband to be able in this manner to lay bare the spotless soul of his wife, and to find that his own image lay enshrined amid its purest and holiest aspirations. His self-esteem was too much flattered not to induce him to overlook the immediate object of the petitioner. While she prayed that she might become the humble instrument of bringing him into the flock of the faithful, she petitioned for forgiveness, on her own behalf, if presumption or indifference to the counsel of the church had caused her to set too high a value on her influence, and led her into the dangerous error of hazarding her own soul by espousing a heretic. There was so much of fervent piety, mingled with so strong a burst of natural feeling, so much of the woman blended with the angel, in her prayers, that Middleton could have forgiven her, had she termed him a Pagan, for the sweetness and interest with which she petitioned in his favour.

The young man waited until his bride arose from her knees, and then he joined her, as if entirely ignorant of what had occurred.

"It is getting late, my Inez," he said, "and Don Augustin would be apt to reproach you with inattention to your health, in being abroad at such an hour. What then am I to do, who am charged with all his authority, and twice his love?"

"Be like him in every thing," she answered, looking up in his face, with tears in her eyes, and speaking with emphasis; "in every thing. Imitate my father, Middleton, and I can ask no more of you."

"Nor for me, Inez? I doubt not that I should be all you can wish, were I to become as good as the worthy and respectable Don Augustin. But you are to make some allowances for the infirmities and habits of a soldier. Now let us go and join this excellent father."

"Not yet," said his bride, gently extricating herself from the arm, that he had thrown around her slight form, while he urged her from the place. "I have still another duty to perform, before I can submit so implicitly to your orders, soldier though you are. I promised the worthy Inesella, my faithful nurse, she who, as you heard, has so long been a mother to me, Middleton—I promised her a visit at this hour. It is the last, as she thinks, that she can receive from her own child, and I cannot disappoint her. Go you then to Don Augustin; in one short hour I will rejoin you."

"Remember it is but an hour!"

"One hour," repeated Inez, as she kissed her hand to him; and then blushing, ashamed at her own boldness, she darted from the arbour, and was seen for an instant gliding towards the cottage of her nurse, in which, at the next moment, she disappeared.

Middleton returned slowly and thoughtfully to the house, often bending his eyes in the direction in which he had last seen his wife, as if he would fain trace her lovely form, in the gloom of the evening, still floating through the vacant space. Don Augustin received

him with warmth, and for many minutes his mind was amused by relating to his new kinsman plans for the future. The exclusive old Spaniard listened to his glowing but true account of the prosperity and happiness of those States, of which he had been an ignorant neighbour half his life, partly in wonder, and partly with that sort of incredulity with which one attends to what he fancies are the exaggerated descriptions of a too partial friendship.

In this manner the hour for which Inez had conditioned passed away, much sooner than her husband could have thought possible, in her absence. At length his looks began to wander to the clock, and then the minutes were counted, as one rolled by after another and Inez did not appear. The hand had already made half of another circuit, around the face of the dial, when Middleton arose and announced his determination to go and offer himself, as an escort to the absentee. He found the night dark, and the heavens charged with threatening vapour, which in that climate was the infallible forerunner of a gust. Stimulated no less by the unpropitious aspect of the skies, than by his secret uneasiness, he quickened his pace, making long and rapid strides in the direction of the cottage of Inesella. Twenty times he stopped, fancying that he caught glimpses of the fairy form of Inez, tripping across the grounds, on her return to the mansion-house, and as often he was obliged to resume his course, in disappointment. He reached the gate of the cottage, knocked, opened the door, entered, and even stood in the presence of the aged nurse, without meeting the person of her he sought. She had already left the place, on her return to her father's house! Believing that he must have passed her in the darkness, Middleton retraced his steps to meet with another disappointment. Inez had not been seen. Without communicating his intention to any one, the bridegroom proceeded with a palpitating heart to the little sequestered arbour, where he had overheard his bride offering up those petitions for his happiness and conversion. Here, too, he was disappointed; and then all was afloat, in the painful incertitude of doubt and conjecture.

For many hours, a secret distrust of the motives of his wife caused Middleton to proceed in the search with delicacy and caution. But as day dawned, without restoring her to the arms of her father or her husband, reserve was thrown aside, and her unaccountable absence was loudly proclaimed. The enquiries after the lost Inez were now direct and open; but they proved equally fruitless. No one had seen her, or heard of her, from the moment that she left the cottage of her nurse.

Day succeeded day, and still no tidings rewarded the search that was immediately instituted, until she was finally given over, by most of her relations and friends, as irretrievably lost.

An event of so extraordinary a character was not likely to be soon forgotten. It excited speculation, gave rise to an infinity of rumours, and not a few inventions. The prevalent opinion, among such of those emigrants who were over-running the country, as had time, in the multitude of their employments, to think of any foreign concerns, was the simple and direct conclusion that the absent bride was no more nor less than a *felo de se*. Father Ignatius had many doubts, and much secret compunction of conscience; but, like a wise chief, he endeavoured to turn the sad event to some account, in the impending warfare of faith. Changing his battery, he whispered in the ears of a few of his oldest parishioners, that he had been deceived in the state of Middleton's mind, which he was now compelled to believe was completely stranded on the quicksands of heresy. He began to show his relics again, and was even heard to allude once more to the delicate and nearly forgotten subject of modern miracles. In consequence of these demonstrations, on the part of the venerable priest, it came to be whispered among the faithful, and finally it was adopted, as part of the parish creed, that Inez had been translated to heaven.

Don Augustin had all the feelings of a father, but they were smothered in the lassitude of a Creole. Like his spiritual governor, he began to think that they had been wrong in consigning one so pure, so young, so lovely, and above all so pious, to the arms of a heretic: and he was fain to believe that the calamity, which had befallen his age, was a judgment on his presumption and want of adherence to established forms. It is true that, as the whispers of the congregation came to his ears, he found present consolation in their belief; but then nature was too powerful, and had too strong a hold of the old man's heart, not to give rise to the rebellious thought, that the succession of his daughter to the heavenly inheritance was a little premature.

But Middleton, the lover, the husband, the bridegroom—Middleton was nearly crushed by the weight of the unexpected and terrible blow. Educated himself under the dominion of a simple and rational faith, in which nothing is attempted to be concealed from the believers, he could have no other apprehensions for the fate of Inez than such as grew out of his knowledge of the superstitious opinions she entertained of his own church. It is needless to dwell on the mental tortures that he endured, or all the various surmises, hopes, and disappointments, that he was fated to experience in the first few weeks of his misery. A jealous distrust of the motives of Inez, and a secret, lingering, hope that he should yet find her, had tempered his enquiries, without however causing him to abandon them entirely. But time was beginning to deprive him, even of the mortifying reflection that he was intentionally, though perhaps temporarily, deserted, and he was gradually yielding to the more painful conviction that she was dead, when his hopes were suddenly revived, in a new and singular manner.

The young commander was slowly and sorrowfully returning from an evening parade of his troops, to his own quarters, which stood at some little distance from the place of the encampment, and on the same high bluff of land, when his vacant eyes fell on the figure of a man, who by the regulations of the place, was not entitled to be there, at that forbidden hour. The stranger was meanly dressed, with every appearance about his person and countenance, of squalid poverty and of the most dissolute habits. Sorrow had softened the military pride of Middleton, and, as he passed the crouching form of the intruder, he said, in tones of great mildness, or rather of kindness—

"You will be given a night in the guard-house, friend, should the patrol find you here;—there is a dollar,—go, and get a better place to sleep in, and something to eat!"

"I swallow all my food, captain, without chewing," returned the vagabond, with the low exultation of an accomplished villain, as he eagerly seized the silver. "Make this Mexican twenty, and I will sell you a secret."

"Go, go," said the other with a little of a soldier's severity, returning to his manner. "Go, before I order the guard to seize you."

"Well, go I will;—but if I do go, captain, I shall take my knowledge with me; and then you may live a widower bewitched till the tattoo of life is beat off."

"What mean you, fellow?" exclaimed Middleton, turning quickly towards the wretch, who was already dragging his diseased limbs from the place.

"I mean to have the value of this dollar in Spanish brandy, and then come back and sell you my secret for enough to buy a barrel."

"If you have any thing to say, speak now," continued Middleton, restraining with difficulty the impatience that urged him to betray his feelings.

"I am a-dry, and I can never talk with elegance when my throat is husky, captain. How much will you give to know what I can tell you; let it be something handsome; such as one gentleman can offer to another."

"I believe it would be better justice to order the drummer to pay you a visit, fellow. To what does your boasted secret relate?"

"Matrimony; a wife and no wife; a pretty face and a rich bride: do I speak plain, now, captain?"

"If you know any thing relating to my wife, say it at once; you need not fear for your reward."

"Ay, captain, I have drove many a bargain in my time, and sometimes I have been paid in money, and sometimes I have been paid in promises; now the last are what I call pinching food."

"Name your price."

"Twenty—no, damn it, it's worth thirty dollars, if it's worth a cent!"

"Here, then, is your money: but remember, if you tell me nothing worth knowing, I have a force that can easily deprive you of it again, and punish your insolence in the bargain."

The fellow examined the bank-bills he received, with a jealous eye, and then pocketed them, apparently well satisfied of their being genuine.

"I like a northern note," he said very coolly; "they have a character to lose like myself. No fear of me, captain; I am a man of honour, and I shall not tell you a word more, nor a word less than I know of my own knowledge to be true."

"Proceed then without further delay, or I may repent, and order you to be deprived of all your gains; the silver as well as the notes."

"Honour, if you die for it!" returned the miscreant, holding up a hand in affected horror at so treacherous a threat. "Well, captain, you must know that gentlemen don't all live by the same calling; some keep what they've got, and some get what they can."

"You have been a thief."

"I scorn the word. I have been a humanity hunter. Do you know what that means? Ay, it has many interpretations. Some people think the woolly-heads are miserable, working on hot plantations under a broiling sun—and all such sorts of inconveniences. Well, captain, I have been, in my time, a man who has been willing to give them the pleasures of variety, at least, by changing the scene for them. You understand me?"

"You are, in plain language, a kidnapper."

"Have been, my worthy captain—have been; but just now a little reduced, like a merchant who leaves off selling tobacco by the hogshead, to deal in it by the yard. I have been a soldier, too, in my day. What is said to be the great secret of our trade, can you tell me that?"

"I know not," said Middleton, beginning to tire of the fellow's trifling; "courage?"

"No, legs—legs to fight with, and legs to run away with—and therein you see my two callings agreed. My legs are none of the best just now, and without legs a kidnapper would carry on a losing trade; but then there are men enough left, better provided than I am."

"Stolen!" groaned the horror-struck husband.

"On her travels, as sure as you are standing still!"

"Villain, what reason have you for believing a thing so shocking?"

"Hands off—hands off—do you think my tongue can do its work the better, for a little squeezing of the throat! Have patience, and you shall know it all; but if you treat me so ungenteelly again, I shall be obliged to call in the assistance of the lawyers."

"Say on; but if you utter a single word more or less than the truth, expect instant vengeance!"

"Are you fool enough to believe what such a scoundrel as I am tells you, captain, unless it has probability to back it? I know you are not: therefore I will give my facts and my opinions, and then leave you to chew on them, while I go and drink of your generosity. I know a man who is called Abiram White.—I believe the knave took that name to show his enmity to the race of blacks! But this gentleman is now, and has been for years, to my certain knowledge, a regular translator of the human body from one State to another. I have dealt with him in my time, and a cheating dog he is! No more honour in him than meat in my stomach. I saw him here in this very town, the day of your wedding. He was in company with his wife's brother, and pretended to be a settler on the hunt for new land. A noble set they were, to carry on business—seven sons, each of them as tall as your sergeant with his cap on. Well, the moment I heard that your wife was lost, I saw at once that Abiram had laid his hands on her."

"Do you know this—can this be true? What reason have you to fancy a thing so wild?"

"Reason enough; I know Abiram White. Now, will you add a trifle just to keep my throat from parching?"

"Go, go; you are stupefied with drink already, miserable man, and know not what you say. Go; go, and beware the drummer."

"Experience is a good guide"—the fellow called after the retiring Middleton; and then turning with a chuckling laugh, like one well satisfied with himself, he made the best of his way towards the shop of the sutler.

A hundred times in the course of that night did Middleton fancy that the communication of the miscreant was entitled to some attention, and as often did he reject the idea as too wild and visionary for another thought. He was awakened early on the following morning, after passing a restless and nearly sleepless night, by his orderly, who came to report that a man was found dead on the



parade, at no great distance from his quarters. Throwing on his clothes he proceeded to the spot, and beheld the individual, with whom he had held the preceding conference, in the precise situation in which he had first been found.

The miserable wretch had fallen a victim to his intemperance. This revolting fact was sufficiently proclaimed by his obtruding eyeballs, his bloated countenance, and the nearly insufferable odours that were even then exhaling from his carcass. Disgusted with the odious spectacle, the youth was turning from the sight, after ordering the corpse to be removed, when the position of one of the dead man's hands struck him. On examination, he found the fore-finger extended, as if in the act of writing in the sand, with the following incomplete sentence, nearly illegible, but yet in a state to be deciphered: "Captain, it is true, as I am a gentle—" He had either died, or fallen into a sleep, the forerunner of his death, before the latter word was finished.

Concealing this fact from the others, Middleton repeated his orders and departed. The pertinacity of the deceased, and all the circumstances united, induced him to set on foot some secret enquiries. He found that a family answering the description which had been given him, had in fact passed the place the day of his nuptials. They were traced along the margin of the Mississippi, for some distance, until they took boat and ascended the river to its confluence with the Missouri. Here they had disappeared like hundreds of others, in pursuit of the hidden wealth of the interior.

Furnished with these facts, Middleton detailed a small guard of his most trusty men, took leave of Don Augustin, without declaring his hopes or his fears, and having arrived at the indicated point, he pushed into the wilderness in pursuit. It was not difficult to trace a train like that of Ishmael, until he was well assured its object lay far beyond the usual limits of the settlements. This circumstance, in itself, quickened his suspicions, and gave additional force to his hopes of final success.

After getting beyond the assistance of verbal directions, the anxious husband had recourse to the usual signs of a trail, in order to follow the fugitives. This he also found a task of no difficulty, until he reached the hard and unyielding soil of the rolling prairies. Here, indeed, he was completely at fault. He found himself, at length, compelled to divide his followers, appointing a place of rendezvous at a distant day, and to endeavour to find the lost trail by multiplying, as much as possible, the number of his eyes. He had been alone a week, when accident brought him in contact with the trapper and the bee-hunter. Part of their interview has been related, and the reader can readily imagine the explanations that succeeded the tale he recounted, and which led, as has already been seen, to the recovery of his bride.

## CHAPTER XVI

These likelihoods confirm her flight from hence,  
Therefore, I pray you, stay not to discourse,  
But mount you presently.

—Shakspeare.

An hour had slid by, in hasty and nearly incoherent questions and answers, before Middleton, hanging over his recovered treasure with that sort of jealous watchfulness with which a miser would regard his hoards, closed the disjointed narrative of his own proceedings by demanding—

“And you, my Inez; in what manner were you treated?”

“In every thing, but the great injustice they did in separating me so forcibly from my friends, as well perhaps as the circumstances of my captors would allow. I think the man, who is certainly the master here, is but a new beginner in wickedness. He quarrelled frightfully in my presence, with the wretch who seized me, and then they made an impious bargain, to which I was compelled to acquiesce, and to which they bound me as well as themselves by oaths. Ah! Middleton, I fear the heretics are not so heedful of their vows as we who are nurtured in the bosom of the true church!”

“Believe it not; these villains are of no religion: did they forswear themselves?”

“No, not perjured: but was it not awful to call upon the good God to witness so sinful a compact?”

“And so we think, Inez, as truly as the most virtuous cardinal of Rome. But how did they observe their oath, and what was its purport?”

“They conditioned to leave me unmolested, and free from their odious presence, provided I would give a pledge to make no effort to escape; and that I would not even show myself, until a time that my masters saw fit to name.”

“And that time?” demanded the impatient Middleton, who so well knew the religious scruples of his wife—“that time?”

“It is already passed. I was sworn by my patron saint, and faithfully did I keep the vow, until the man they call Ishmael forgot the terms by offering violence. I then made my appearance on the rock, for the time too was passed; though I even think father Ignatius would have absolved me from the vow, on account of the treachery of my keepers.”

“If he had not,” muttered the youth between his compressed teeth, “I would have absolved him for ever from his spiritual care of your conscience!”

“You, Middleton!” returned his wife looking up into his flushed face, while a bright blush suffused her own sweet countenance; “you may receive my vows, but surely you can have no power to absolve me from their observance!”

“No, no, no. Inez, you are right. I know but little of these conscientious subtilties, and I am any thing but a priest: yet tell me, what has induced these monsters to play this desperate game—to trifle thus with my happiness?”

“You know my ignorance of the world, and how ill I am qualified to furnish reasons for the conduct of beings so different from any I have ever seen before. But does not love of money drive men to acts even worse than this? I believe they thought that an aged and wealthy father could be tempted to pay them a rich ransom for his child; and, perhaps,” she added, stealing an enquiring glance through her tears, at the attentive Middleton, “they counted something on the fresh affections of a bridegroom.”

“They might have extracted the blood from my heart, drop by drop!”

“Yes,” resumed his young and timid wife, instantly withdrawing the stolen look she had hazarded, and hurriedly pursuing the train of the discourse, as if glad to make him forget the liberty she had just taken, “I have been told, there are men so base as to perjure themselves at the altar, in order to command the gold of ignorant and confiding girls; and if love of money will lead to such baseness, we may surely expect it will hurry those, who devote themselves to gain, into acts of lesser fraud.”

“It must be so; and now, Inez, though I am here to guard you with my life, and we are in possession of this rock, our difficulties, perhaps our dangers, are not ended. You will summon all your courage to meet the trial and prove yourself a soldier's wife, my Inez?”

“I am ready to depart this instant. The letter you sent by the physician, had prepared me to hope for the best, and I have every thing arranged for flight, at the shortest warning.”

“Let us then leave this place and join our friends.”

“Friends!” interrupted Inez, glancing her eyes around the little tent in quest of the form of Ellen. “I, too, have a friend who must not be forgotten, but who is pledged to pass the remainder of her life with us. She is gone!”

Middleton gently led her from the spot, as he smilingly answered—

“She may have had, like myself, her own private communications for some favoured ear.”

The young man had not however done justice to the motives of Ellen Wade. The sensitive and intelligent girl had readily perceived how little her presence was necessary in the interview that has just been related, and had retired with that intuitive delicacy of feeling which seems to belong more properly to her sex. She was now to be seen seated on a point of the rock, with her person so entirely enveloped in her dress as to conceal her features. Here she had remained for near an hour, no one approaching to address her, and as it appeared to her own quick and jealous eyes, totally unobserved. In the latter particular, however, even the vigilance of the quick-sighted Ellen was deceived.

The first act of Paul Hover, on finding himself the master of Ishmael's citadel, had been to sound the note of victory, after the quaint

and ludicrous manner that is so often practised among the borderers of the West. Flapping his sides with his hands, as the conquering game-cock is wont to do with his wings, he raised a loud and laughable imitation of the exultation of this bird; a cry which might have proved a dangerous challenge had any one of the athletic sons of the squatter been within hearing.

"This has been a regular knock-down and drag-out," he cried, "and no bones broke! How now, old trapper, you have been one of your training, platoon, rank and file soldiers in your day, and have seen forts taken and batteries stormed before this—am I right?"

"Ay, ay, that have I," answered the old man, who still maintained his post at the foot of the rock, so little disturbed by what he had just witnessed, as to return the grin of Paul, with a hearty indulgence in his own silent and peculiar laughter; "you have gone through the exploit like men!"

"Now tell me, is it not in rule, to call over the names of the living, and to bury the dead, after every bloody battle?"

"Some did and other some didn't. When Sir William push'd the German, Dieskau, thro' the defiles at the foot of the Hori—"

"Your Sir William was a drone to Sir Paul, and knew nothing of regularity. So here begins the roll-call—by the by, old man, what between bee-hunting and buffaloe humps, and certain other matters, I have been too busy to ask your name; for I intend to begin with my rear-guard, well knowing that my man in front is too busy to answer."

"Lord, lad, I've been called in my time by as many names as there are people among whom I've dwelt. Now the Delawares nam'd me for my eyes, and I was called after the far-sighted hawk. Then, ag'in, the settlers in the Otsego hills christened me anew, from the fashion of my leggings; and various have been the names by which I have gone through life; but little will it matter when the time shall come, that all are to be muster'd, face to face, by what titles a mortal has played his part! I humbly trust I shall be able to answer to any of mine, in a loud and manly voice."

Paul paid little or no attention to this reply, more than half of which was lost in the distance, but pursuing the humour of the moment, he called out in a stentorian voice to the naturalist to answer to his name. Dr. Battius had not thought it necessary to push his success beyond the comfortable niche, which accident had so opportunely formed for his protection, and in which he now reposed from his labours, with a pleasing consciousness of security, added to great exultation at the possession of the botanical treasure already mentioned.

"Mount, mount, my worthy mole-catcher! come and behold the prospect of skirting Ishmael; come and look nature boldly in the face, and not go sneaking any longer, among the prairie grass and mullein tops, like a gobbler nibbling for grasshoppers."

The mouth of the light-hearted and reckless bee-hunter was instantly closed, and he was rendered as mute, as he had just been boisterous and talkative, by the appearance of Ellen Wade. When the melancholy maiden took her seat on the point of the rock as mentioned, Paul affected to employ himself in conducting a close inspection of the household effects of the squatter. He rummaged the drawers of Esther with no delicate hands, scattered the rustic finery of her girls on the ground, without the least deference to its quality or elegance, and tossed her pots and kettles here and there, as though they had been vessels of wood instead of iron. All this industry was, however, manifestly without an object. He reserved nothing for himself, not even appearing conscious of the nature of the articles which suffered by his familiarity. When he had examined the inside of every cabin, taken a fresh survey of the spot where he had confined the children, and where he had thoroughly secured them with cords, and kicked one of the pails of the woman, like a foot-ball, fifty feet into the air, in sheer wantonness, he returned to the edge of the rock, and thrusting both his hands through his wampum belt, he began to whistle the "Kentucky Hunters" as diligently as if he had been hired to supply his auditors with music by the hour. In this manner passed the remainder of the time, until Middleton, as has been related, led Inez forth from the tent, and gave a new direction to the thoughts of the whole party. He summoned Paul from his flourish of music, tore the Doctor from the study of his plant, and, as acknowledged leader, gave the necessary orders for immediate departure.

In the bustle and confusion that were likely to succeed such a mandate, there was little opportunity to indulge in complaints or reflections. As the adventurers had not come unprepared for victory, each individual employed himself in such offices as were best adapted to his strength and situation. The trapper had already made himself master of the patient *Asinus*, who was quietly feeding at no great distance from the rock, and he was now busy in fitting his back with the complicated machinery that Dr. Battius saw fit to term a saddle of his own invention. The naturalist himself seized upon his portfolios, herbals, and collection of insects, which he quickly transferred from the encampment of the squatter, to certain pockets in the aforesaid ingenious invention, and which the trapper as uniformly cast away the moment his back was turned. Paul showed his dexterity in removing such light articles as Inez and Ellen had prepared for their flight to the foot of the citadel, while Middleton, after mingling threats and promises, in order to induce the children to remain quietly in their bondage, assisted the females to descend. As time began to press upon them, and there was great danger of Ishmael's returning, these several movements were made with singular industry and despatch.

The trapper bestowed such articles as he conceived were necessary to the comfort of the weaker and more delicate members of the party, in those pockets from which he had so unceremoniously expelled the treasures of the unconscious naturalist, and then gave way for Middleton to place Inez in one of those seats which he had prepared on the back of the animal for her and her companion.

"Go, child," the old man said, motioning to Ellen to follow the example of the lady, and turning his head a little anxiously to examine the waste behind him. "It cannot be long afore the owner of this place will be coming to look after his household; and he is not a man to give up his property, however obtained, without complaint!"

"It is true," cried Middleton; "we have wasted moments that are precious, and have the utmost need of industry."

"Ay, ay, I thought it; and would have said it, captain; but I remembered how your grand'ther used to love to look upon the face of her he led away for a wife, in the days of his youth and his happiness. 'Tis natur', 'tis natur', and 'tis wiser to give way a little before its feelings, than to try to stop a current that will have its course."

Ellen advanced to the side of the beast, and seizing Inez by the hand, she said, with heartfelt warmth, after struggling to suppress an emotion that nearly choked her—

“God bless you, sweet lady! I hope you will forget and forgive the wrongs you have received from my uncle—”

The humbled and sorrowful girl could say no more, her voice becoming entirely inaudible in an ungovernable burst of grief.

“How is this?” cried Middleton; “did you not say, Inez, that this excellent young woman was to accompany us, and to live with us for the remainder of her life; or, at least, until she found some more agreeable residence for herself?”

“I did; and I still hope it. She has always given me reason to believe, that after having shown so much commiseration and friendship in my misery, she would not desert me, should happier times return.”

“I cannot—I ought not,” continued Ellen, getting the better of her momentary weakness. “It has pleased God to cast my lot among these people, and I ought not to quit them. It would be adding the appearance of treachery to what will already seem bad enough, with one of his opinions. He has been kind to me, an orphan, after his rough customs, and I cannot steal from him at such a moment.”

“She is just as much a relation of skirting Ishmael as I am a bishop!” said Paul, with a loud hem, as if his throat wanted clearing. “If the old fellow has done the honest thing by her, in giving her a morsel of venison now and then, or a spoon around his homminy dish, hasn’t she pay’d him in teaching the young devils to read their Bible, or in helping old Esther to put her finery in shape and fashion. Tell me that a drone has a sting, and I’ll believe you as easily as I will that this young woman is a debtor to any of the tribe of Bush!”

“It is but little matter who owes me, or where I am in debt. There are none to care for a girl who is fatherless and motherless, and whose nearest kin are the offcasts of all honest people. No, no; go, lady, and Heaven for ever bless you! I am better here, in this desert, where there are none to know my shame.”

“Now, old trapper,” retorted Paul, “this is what I call knowing which way the wind blows! You ar’ a man that has seen life, and you know something of fashions; I put it to your judgment, plainly, isn’t it in the nature of things for the hive to swarm when the young get their growth, and if children will quit their parents, ought one who is of no kith or kin—”

“Hist!” interrupted the man he addressed, “Hector is discontented. Say it out, plainly, pup; what is it dog—what is it?”

The venerable hound had risen, and was scenting the fresh breeze which continued to sweep heavily over the prairie. At the words of his master he growled and contracted the muscles of his lips, as if half disposed to threaten with the remnants of his teeth. The younger dog, who was resting after the chase of the morning, also made some signs that his nose detected a taint in the air, and then the two resumed their slumbers, as if they had done enough.

The trapper seized the bridle of the ass, and cried, urging the beast onward—

“There is no time for words. The squatter and his brood are within a mile or two of this blessed spot!”

Middleton lost all recollection of Ellen, in the danger which now so eminently beset his recovered bride; nor is it necessary to add, that Dr. Battius did not wait for a second admonition to commence his retreat.

Following the route indicated by the old man, they turned the rock in a body, and pursued their way as fast as possible across the prairie, under the favour of the cover it afforded.

Paul Hover, however, remained in his tracks, sullenly leaning on his rifle. Near a minute had elapsed before he was observed by Ellen, who had buried her face in her hands, to conceal her fancied desolation from herself.

“Why do you not fly?” the weeping girl exclaimed, the instant she perceived she was not alone.

“I’m not used to it.”

“My uncle will soon be here! you have nothing to hope from his pity.”

“Nor from that of his niece, I reckon. Let him come; he can only knock me on the head!”

“Paul, Paul, if you love me, fly.”

“Alone!—if I do, may I be—”

“If you value your life, fly!”

“I value it not, compared to you.”

“Paul!”

“Ellen!”

She extended both her hands and burst into another and a still more violent flood of tears. The bee-hunter put one of his sturdy arms around her waist, and in another moment he was urging her over the plain, in rapid pursuit of their flying friends.

## CHAPTER XVII

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight  
With a new Gorgon—Do not bid me speak;  
See, and then speak yourselves.

—Shakspeare.

The little run, which supplied the family of the squatter with water, and nourished the trees and bushes that grew near the base of the rocky eminence, took its rise at no great distance from the latter, in a small thicket of cotton-wood and vines. Hither, then, the trapper directed the flight, as to the place affording the only available cover in so pressing an emergency. It will be remembered, that the sagacity of the old man, which, from long practice in similar scenes, amounted nearly to an instinct in all cases of sudden danger, had first induced him to take this course, as it placed the hill between them and the approaching party. Favoured by this circumstance, he succeeded in reaching the bushes in sufficient time and Paul Hover had just hurried the breathless Ellen into the tangled bush, as Ishmael gained the summit of the rock, in the manner already described, where he stood like a man momentarily bereft of sense, gazing at the confusion which had been created among his chattels, or at his gagged and bound children, who had been safely bestowed, by the forethought of the bee-hunter, under the cover of a bark roof, in a sort of irregular pile. A long rifle would have thrown a bullet from the height, on which the squatter now stood, into the very cover where the fugitives, who had wrought all this mischief, were clustered.

The trapper was the first to speak, as the man on whose intelligence and experience they all depended for counsel, after running his eye over the different individuals who gathered about him, in order to see that none were missing.

"Ah! natur' is natur', and has done its work!" he said, nodding to the exulting Paul, with a smile of approbation. "I thought it would be hard for those, who had so often met in fair and foul, by starlight and under the clouded moon, to part at last in anger. Now is there little time to lose in talk, and every thing to gain by industry! It cannot be long afore some of yonder brood will be nosing along the 'arth for our trail, and should they find it, as find it they surely will, and should they push us to a stand on our courage, the dispute must be settled with the rifle; which may He in heaven forbid! Captain, can you lead us to the place where any of your warriors lie?—For the stout sons of the squatter will make a manly brush of it, or I am but little of a judge in warlike dispositions!"

"The place of rendezvous is many leagues from this, on the banks of La Platte."

"It is bad—it is bad. If fighting is to be done, it is always wise to enter on it on equal terms. But what has one so near his time to do with ill-blood and hot-blood at his heart! Listen to what a grey head and some experience have to offer, and then if any among you can point out a wiser fashion for a retreat, we can just follow his design, and forget that I have spoken. This thicket stretches for near a mile as it may be slanting from the rock, and leads towards the sunset instead of the settlements."

"Enough, enough," cried Middleton, too impatient to wait until the deliberative and perhaps loquacious old man could end his minute explanation. "Time is too precious for words. Let us fly."

The trapper made a gesture of compliance, and turning in his tracks, he led Asinus across the trembling earth of the swale, and quickly emerged on the hard ground, on the side opposite to the encampment of the squatter.

"If old Ishmael gets a squint at that highway through the brush," cried Paul, casting, as he left the place, a hasty glance at the broad trail the party had made through the thicket, "he'll need no finger-board to tell him which way his road lies. But let him follow! I know the vagabond would gladly cross his breed with a little honest blood, but if any son of his ever gets to be the husband of—"

"Hush, Paul, hush," said the terrified young woman, who leaned on his arm for support; "your voice might be heard."

The bee-hunter was silent, though he did not cease to cast ominous looks behind him, as they flew along the edge of the run, which sufficiently betrayed the belligerent condition of his mind. As each one was busy for himself, but a few minutes elapsed before the party rose a swell of the prairie, and descending without a moment's delay on the opposite side, they were at once removed from every danger of being seen by the sons of Ishmael, unless the pursuers should happen to fall upon their trail. The old man now profited by the formation of the land to take another direction, with a view to elude pursuit, as a vessel changes her course in fogs and darkness, to escape from the vigilance of her enemies.

Two hours, passed in the utmost diligence, enabled them to make a half circuit around the rock, and to reach a point that was exactly opposite to the original direction of their flight. To most of the fugitives their situation was as entirely unknown as is that of a ship in the middle of the ocean to the uninstructed voyager: but the old man proceeded at every turn, and through every bottom, with a decision that inspired his followers with confidence, as it spoke favourably of his own knowledge of the localities. His hound, stopping now and then to catch the expression of his eye, had preceded the trapper throughout the whole distance, with as much certainty as though a previous and intelligible communion between them had established the route by which they were to proceed. But, at the expiration of the time just named, the dog suddenly came to a stand, and then seating himself on the prairie, he snuffed the air a moment, and began a low and piteous whining.

"Ay—pup—ay. I know the spot—I know the spot, and reason there is to remember it well!" said the old man, stopping by the side of his uneasy associate, until those who followed had time to come up. "Now, yonder, is a thicket before us," he continued, pointing forward, "where we may lie till tall trees grow on these naked fields, afore any of the squatter's kin will venture to molest us."

"This is the spot, where the body of the dead man lay!" cried Middleton, examining the place with an eye that revolted at the recollection.

"The very same. But whether his friends have put him in the bosom of the ground or not, remains to be seen. The hound knows the

scent, but seems to be a little at a loss, too. It is therefore necessary that you advance, friend bee-hunter, to examine, while I tarry to keep the dogs from complaining in too loud a voice."

"I!" exclaimed Paul, thrusting his hand into his shaggy locks, like one who thought it prudent to hesitate before he undertook so formidable an adventure; "now, heark'ee, old trapper; I've stood in my thinnest cottons in the midst of many a swarm that has lost its queen-bee, without winking, and let me tell you, the man who can do that, is not likely to fear any living son of skirting Ishmael; but as to meddling with dead men's bones, why it is neither my calling nor my inclination; so, after thanking you for the favour of your choice, as they say, when they make a man a corporal in Kentucky, I decline serving."

The old man turned a disappointed look towards Middleton, who was too much occupied in solacing Inez to observe his embarrassment, which was, however, suddenly relieved from a quarter, whence, from previous circumstances, there was little reason to expect such a demonstration of fortitude.

Doctor Battius had rendered himself a little remarkable throughout the whole of the preceding retreat, for the exceeding diligence with which he had laboured to effect that desirable object. So very conspicuous was his zeal, indeed, as to have entirely gotten the better of all his ordinary predilections. The worthy naturalist belonged to that species of discoverers, who make the worst possible travelling companions to a man who has reason to be in a hurry. No stone, no bush, no plant is ever suffered to escape the examination of their vigilant eyes, and thunder may mutter, and rain fall, without disturbing the abstraction of their reveries. Not so, however, with the disciple of Linnaeus, during the momentous period that it remained a mooted point at the tribunal of his better judgment, whether the stout descendants of the squatter were not likely to dispute his right to traverse the prairie in freedom. The highest blooded and best trained hound, with his game in view, could not have run with an eye more riveted than that with which the Doctor had pursued his curvilinear course. It was perhaps lucky for his fortitude that he was ignorant of the artifice of the trapper in leading them around the citadel of Ishmael, and that he had imbibed the soothing impression that every inch of prairie he traversed was just so much added to the distance between his own person and the detested rock. Notwithstanding the momentary shock he certainly experienced, when he discovered this error, he now boldly volunteered to enter the thicket in which there was some reason to believe the body of the murdered Asa still lay. Perhaps the naturalist was urged to show his spirit, on this occasion, by some secret consciousness that his excessive industry in the retreat might be liable to misconstruction; and it is certain that, whatever might be his peculiar notions of danger from the quick, his habits and his knowledge had placed him far above the apprehension of suffering harm from any communication with the dead.

"If there is any service to be performed, which requires the perfect command of the nervous system," said the man of science, with a look that was slightly blustering, "you have only to give a direction to his intellectual faculties, and here stands one on whose physical powers you may depend."

"The man is given to speak in parables," muttered the single-minded trapper; "but I conclude there is always some meaning hidden in his words, though it is as hard to find sense in his speeches, as to discover three eagles on the same tree. It will be wise, friend, to make a cover, lest the sons of the squatter should be out skirting on our trail, and, as you well know, there is some reason to fear yonder thicket contains a sight that may horrify a woman's mind. Are you man enough to look death in the face; or shall I run the risk of the hounds raising an outcry, and go in myself? You see the pup is willing to run with an open mouth, already."

"Am I man enough! Venerable trapper, our communications have a recent origin, or thy interrogatory might have a tendency to embroil us in angry disputation. Am I man enough! I claim to be of the class, mammalia; order, primates; genus, homo! Such are my physical attributes; of my moral properties, let posterity speak; it becomes me to be mute."

"Physic may do for such as relish it; to my taste and judgment it is neither palatable nor healthy; but morals never did harm to any living mortal, be it that he was a sojourner in the forest, or a dweller in the midst of glazed windows and smoking chimneys. It is only a few hard words that divide us, friend; for I am of an opinion that, with use and freedom, we should come to understand one another, and mainly settle down into the same judgments of mankind, and of the ways of world. Quiet, Hector, quiet; what ruffles your temper, pup; is it not used to the scent of human blood?"

The Doctor bestowed a gracious but commiserating smile on the philosopher of nature, as he retrograded a step or two from the place whither he had been impelled by his excess of spirit, in order to reply with less expenditure of breath, and with a greater freedom of air and attitude.

"A homo is certainly a homo," he said, stretching forth an arm in an argumentative manner; "so far as the animal functions extend, there are the connecting links of harmony, order, conformity, and design, between the whole genus; but there the resemblance ends. Man may be degraded to the very margin of the line which separates him from the brute, by ignorance; or he may be elevated to a communion with the great Master-spirit of all, by knowledge; nay, I know not, if time and opportunity were given him, but he might become the master of all learning, and consequently equal to the great moving principle."

The old man, who stood leaning on his rifle in a thoughtful attitude, shook his head, as he answered with a native steadiness, that entirely eclipsed the imposing air which his antagonist had seen fit to assume—

"This is neither more nor less than mortal wickedness! Here have I been a dweller on the earth for four-score and six changes of the seasons, and all that time have I look'd at the growing and the dying trees, and yet do I not know the reasons why the bud starts under the summer sun, or the leaf falls when it is pinch'd by the frosts. Your l'arning, though it is man's boast, is folly in the eyes of Him, who sits in the clouds, and looks down, in sorrow, at the pride and vanity of his creatur's. Many is the hour that I've passed, lying in the shades of the woods, or stretch'd upon the hills of these open fields, looking up into the blue skies, where I could fancy the Great One had taken his stand, and was solemnising on the waywardness of man and brute, below, as I myself had often look'd at the ants tumbling over each other in their eagerness, though in a way and a fashion more suited to His mightiness and power. Knowledge! It is his plaything. Say, you who think it so easy to climb into the judgment-seat above, can you tell me any thing of the beginning and the end? Nay, you're a dealer in ailings and cures: what is life, and what is death? Why does the eagle live so long, and why is the time of the butterfly so short? Tell me a simpler thing: why is this hound so uneasy, while you, who have passed your days in looking into

books, can see no reason to be disturbed?"

The Doctor, who had been a little astounded by the dignity and energy of the old man, drew a long breath, like a sullen wrestler who is just released from the throttling grasp of his antagonist, and seized on the opportunity of the pause to reply—

"It is his instinct."

"And what is the gift of instinct?"

"An inferior gradation of reason. A sort of mysterious combination of thought and matter."

"And what is that which you call thought?"

"Venerable venator, this is a method of reasoning which sets at nought the uses of definitions, and such as I do assure you is not at all tolerated in the schools."

"Then is there more cunning in your schools than I had thought, for it is a certain method of showing them their vanity," returned the trapper, suddenly abandoning a discussion, from which the naturalist was just beginning to anticipate great delight, by turning to his dog, whose restlessness he attempted to appease by playing with his ears. "This is foolish, Hector; more like an untrained pup than a sensible hound; one who has got his education by hard experience, and not by nosing over the trails of other dogs, as a boy in the settlements follows on the track of his masters, be it right or be it wrong. Well, friend; you who can do so much, are you equal to looking into the thicket? or must I go in myself?"

The Doctor again assumed his air of resolution, and, without further parance, proceeded to do as desired. The dogs were so far restrained, by the remonstrances of the old man, as to confine their noise to low but often-repeated whinings. When they saw the naturalist advance, the pup, however, broke through all restraint, and made a swift circuit around his person, scenting the earth as he proceeded, and then, returning to his companion, he howled aloud.

"The squatter and his brood have left a strong scent on the earth," said the old man, watching as he spoke for some signal from his learned pioneer to follow; "I hope yonder school-bred man knows enough to remember the errand on which I have sent him."

Doctor Battius had already disappeared in the bushes and the trapper was beginning to betray additional evidences of impatience, when the person of the former was seen retiring from the thicket backwards, with his face fastened on the place he had just left, as if his look was bound in the thralldom of some charm.

"Here is something skeery, by the wildness of the creatur's countenance!" exclaimed the old man relinquishing his hold of Hector, and moving stoutly to the side of the totally unconscious naturalist. "How is it, friend; have you found a new leaf in your book of wisdom?"

"It is a basilisk!" muttered the Doctor, whose altered visage betrayed the utter confusion which beset his faculties. "An animal of the order, serpens. I had thought its attributes were fabulous, but mighty nature is equal to all that man can imagine!"

"What is't? what is't? The snakes of the prairies are harmless, unless it be now and then an angered rattler and he always gives you notice with his tail, afore he works his mischief with his fangs. Lord, Lord, what a humbling thing is fear! Here is one who in common delivers words too big for a humble mouth to hold, so much beside himself, that his voice is as shrill as the whistle of the whip-poor-will! Courage!—what is it, man?—what is it?"

"A prodigy! a *lusus naturae*! a monster, that nature has delighted to form, in order to exhibit her power! Never before have I witnessed such an utter confusion in her laws, or a specimen that so completely bids defiance to the distinctions of class and genera. Let me record its appearance," fumbling for his tablets with hands that trembled too much to perform their office, "while time and opportunity are allowed—eyes, entralling; colour, various, complex, and profound—"

"One would think the man was craz'd, with his entralling looks and pieball'd colours!" interrupted the discontented trapper, who began to grow a little uneasy that his party was all this time neglecting to seek the protection of some cover. "If there is a reptile in the brush, show me the creatur', and should it refuse to depart peaceably, why there must be a quarrel for the possession of the place."

"There!" said the Doctor, pointing into a dense mass of the thicket, to a spot within fifty feet of that where they both stood. The trapper turned his look, with perfect composure, in the required direction, but the instant his practised glance met the object which had so utterly upset the philosophy of the naturalist, he gave a start himself, threw his rifle rapidly forward, and as instantly recovered it, as if a second flash of thought convinced him he was wrong. Neither the instinctive movement, nor the sudden recollection, was without a sufficient object. At the very margin of the thicket, and in absolute contact with the earth, lay an animate ball, that might easily, by the singularity and fierceness of its aspect, have justified the disturbed condition of the naturalist's mind. It were difficult to describe the shape or colours of this extraordinary substance, except to say, in general terms, that it was nearly spherical, and exhibited all the hues of the rainbow, intermingled without reference to harmony, and without any very ostensible design. The predominant hues were a black and a bright vermilion. With these, however, the several tints of white, yellow, and crimson, were strangely and wildly blended. Had this been all, it would have been difficult to have pronounced that the object was possessed of life, for it lay motionless as any stone; but a pair of dark, glaring, and moving eyeballs which watched with jealousy the smallest movement of the trapper and his companion, sufficiently established the important fact of its possessing vitality.

"Your reptile is a scouter, or I'm no judge of Indian paints and Indian deviltries!" muttered the old man, dropping the butt of his weapon to the ground, and gazing with a steady eye at the frightful object, as he leaned on its barrel, in an attitude of great composure. "He wants to face us out of sight and reason, and make us think the head of a red-skin is a stone covered with the autumn leaf; or he has some other devilish artifice in his mind!"

"Is the animal human?" demanded the Doctor, "of the genus *homo*? I had fancied it a non-descript."

"It's as human, and as mortal too, as a warrior of these prairies is ever known to be. I have seen the time when a red-skin would have shown a foolish daring to peep out of his ambushment in that fashion on a hunter I could name, but who is too old now, and too near his time, to be any thing better than a miserable trapper. It will be well to speak to the imp, and to let him know he deals with men

whose beards are grown. Come forth from your cover, friend," he continued, in the language of the extensive tribes of the Dahcotahs; "there is room on the prairie for another warrior."

The eyes appeared to glare more fiercely than ever, but the mass which, according to the trapper's opinion, was neither more nor less than a human head, shorn, as usual among the warriors of the west, of its hair, still continued without motion, or any other sign of life.

"It is a mistake!" exclaimed the doctor. "The animal is not even of the class, mammalia, much less a man."

"So much for your knowledge!" returned the trapper, laughing with great exultation. "So much for the learning of one who has look'd into so many books, that his eyes are not able to tell a moose from a wild-cat! Now my Hector, here, is a dog of education after his fashion, and, though the meanest primmer in the settlements would puzzle his information, you could not cheat the hound in a matter like this. As you think the object no man, you shall see his whole formation, and then let an ignorant old trapper, who never willingly pass'd a day within reach of a spelling-book in his life, know by what name to call it. Mind, I mean no violence; but just to start the devil from his ambushment."

The trapper very deliberately examined the priming of his rifle, taking care to make as great a parade as possible of his hostile intentions, in going through the necessary evolutions with the weapon. When he thought the stranger began to apprehend some danger, he very deliberately presented the piece, and called aloud—

"Now, friend, I am all for peace, or all for war, as you may say. No! well it is no man, as the wiser one, here, says, and there can be no harm in just firing into a bunch of leaves."

The muzzle of the rifle fell as he concluded, and the weapon was gradually settling into a steady, and what would easily have proved a fatal aim, when a tall Indian sprang from beneath that bed of leaves and brush, which he had collected about his person at the approach of the party, and stood upright, uttering the exclamation—

"Wagh!"



## CHAPTER XVIII

My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove.  
—Shakspeare.

The trapper, who had meditated no violence, dropped his rifle again, and laughing at the success of his experiment, with great seeming self-complacency, he drew the astounded gaze of the naturalist from the person of the savage to himself, by saying—

“The imps will lie for hours, like sleeping alligators, brooding their deviltries in dreams and other craftiness, until such time as they see some real danger is at hand, and then they look to themselves the same as other mortals. But this is a scout in his war-paint! There should be more of his tribe at no great distance. Let us draw the truth out of him; for an unlucky war-party may prove more dangerous to us than a visit from the whole family of the squatter.”

“It is truly a desperate and a dangerous species!” said the Doctor, relieving his amazement by a breath that seemed to exhaust his lungs of air; “a violent race, and one that it is difficult to define or class, within the usual boundaries of definitions. Speak to him, therefore; but let thy words be strong in amity.”

The old man cast a keen eye on every side of him, to ascertain the important particular whether the stranger was supported by any associates, and then making the usual signs of peace, by exhibiting the palm of his naked hand, he boldly advanced. In the mean time, the Indian betrayed no evidence of uneasiness. He suffered the trapper to draw nigh, maintaining by his own mien and attitude a striking air of dignity and fearlessness. Perhaps the wary warrior also knew that, owing to the difference in their weapons, he should be placed more on an equality, by being brought nearer to the strangers.

As a description of this individual may furnish some idea of the personal appearance of a whole race, it may be well to detain the narrative, in order to present it to the reader, in our hasty and imperfect manner. Would the truant eyes of Alston or Greenough turn, but for a time, from their gaze at the models of antiquity, to contemplate this wronged and humbled people, little would be left for such inferior artists as ourselves to delineate.

The Indian in question was in every particular a warrior of fine stature and admirable proportions. As he cast aside his mask, composed of such party-coloured leaves, as he had hurriedly collected, his countenance appeared in all the gravity, the dignity, and, it may be added, in the terror of his profession. The outlines of his lineaments were strikingly noble, and nearly approaching to Roman, though the secondary features of his face were slightly marked with the well-known traces of his Asiatic origin. The peculiar tint of the skin, which in itself is so well designed to aid the effect of a martial expression, had received an additional aspect of wild ferocity from the colours of the war-paint. But, as if he disdained the usual artifices of his people, he bore none of those strange and horrid devices, with which the children of the forest are accustomed, like the more civilised heroes of the moustache, to back their reputation for courage, contenting himself with a broad and deep shadowing of black, that served as a sufficient and an admirable foil to the brighter gleamings of his native swarthinness. His head was as usual shaved to the crown, where a large and gallant scalp-lock seemed to challenge the grasp of his enemies. The ornaments that were ordinarily pendant from the cartilages of his ears had been removed, on account of his present pursuit. His body, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, was nearly naked, and the portion which was clad bore a vestment no warmer than a light robe of the finest dressed deer-skin, beautifully stained with the rude design of some daring exploit, and which was carelessly worn, as if more in pride than from any unmanly regard to comfort. His leggings were of bright scarlet cloth, the only evidence about his person that he had held communion with the traders of the Pale-faces. But as if to furnish some offset to this solitary submission to a womanish vanity, they were fearfully fringed, from the gartered knee to the bottom of the moccasin, with the hair of human scalps. He leaned lightly with one hand on a short hickory bow, while the other rather touched than sought support, from the long, delicate handle of an ashen lance. A quiver made of the cougar skin, from which the tail of the animal depended, as a characteristic ornament, was slung at his back, and a shield of hides, quaintly emblazoned with another of his warlike deeds, was suspended from his neck by a thong of sinews.

As the trapper approached, this warrior maintained his calm upright attitude, discovering neither an eagerness to ascertain the character of those who advanced upon him, nor the smallest wish to avoid a scrutiny in his own person. An eye, that was darker and more shining than that of the stag, was incessantly glancing, however, from one to another of the stranger party, seemingly never knowing rest for an instant.

“Is my brother far from his village?” demanded the old man, in the Pawnee language, after examining the paint, and those other little signs by which a practised eye knows the tribe of the warrior he encounters in the American deserts, with the same readiness, and by the same sort of mysterious observation, as that by which the seaman knows the distant sail.

“It is farther to the towns of the Big-knives,” was the laconic reply.

“Why is a Pawnee-Loup so far from the fork of his own river, without a horse to journey on, and in a spot empty as this?”

“Can the women and children of a Pale-face live without the meat of the bison? There was hunger in my lodge.”

“My brother is very young to be already the master of a lodge,” returned the trapper, looking steadily into the unmoved countenance of the youthful warrior; “but I dare say he is brave, and that many a chief has offered him his daughters for wives. But he has been mistaken,” pointing to the arrow, which was dangling from the hand that held the bow, “in bringing a loose and barbed arrow-head to kill the buffalo. Do the Pawnees wish the wounds they give their game to rankle?”

“It is good to be ready for the Sioux. Though not in sight, a bush may hide him.”

“The man is a living proof of the truth of his words,” muttered the trapper in English, “and a close-jointed and gallant looking lad he

is; but far too young for a chief of any importance. It is wise, however, to speak him fair, for a single arm thrown into either party, if we come to blows with the squatter and his brood, may turn the day. You see my children are weary," he continued in the dialect of the prairies, pointing, as he spoke, to the rest of the party, who, by this time, were also approaching. "We wish to camp and eat. Does my brother claim this spot?"

"The runners from the people on the Big-river, tell us that your nation have traded with the Tawney-faces who live beyond the salt-lake, and that the prairies are now the hunting grounds of the Big-knives!"

"It is true, as I hear, also, from the hunters and trappers on La Platte. Though it is with the Frenchers, and not with the men who claim to own the Mexicos, that my people have bargained."

"And warriors are going up the Long-river, to see that they have not been cheated, in what they have bought?"

"Ay, that is partly true, too, I fear; and it will not be long before an accursed band of choppers and loggers will be following on their heels, to humble the wilderness which lies so broad and rich on the western banks of the Mississippi, and then the land will be a peopled desert, from the shores of the main sea to the foot of the Rocky Mountains; fill'd with all the abominations and craft of man, and stript of the comforts and loveliness it received from the hands of the Lord!"

"And where were the chiefs of the Pawnee-Loups, when this bargain was made?" suddenly demanded the youthful warrior, a look of startling fierceness gleaming, at the same instant, athwart his dark visage. "Is a nation to be sold like the skin of a beaver?"

"Right enough—right enough, and where were truth and honesty, also? But might is right, according to the fashions of the 'arth; and what the strong choose to do, the weak must call justice. If the law of the Wahcondah was as much hearkened to, Pawnee, as the laws of the Long-knives, your right to the prairies would be as good as that of the greatest chief in the settlements to the house which covers his head."

"The skin of the traveller is white," said the young native, laying a finger impressively on the hard and wrinkled hand of the trapper. "Does his heart say one thing and his tongue another?"

"The Wahcondah of a white man has ears, and he shuts them to a lie. Look at my head; it is like a frosted pine, and must soon be laid in the ground. Why then should I wish to meet the Great Spirit, face to face, while his countenance is dark upon me."

The Pawnee gracefully threw his shield over one shoulder, and placing a hand on his chest, he bent his head, in deference to the grey locks exhibited by the trapper; after which his eye became more steady, and his countenance less fierce. Still he maintained every appearance of a distrust and watchfulness that were rather tempered and subdued, than forgotten. When this equivocal species of amity was established between the warrior of the prairies and the experienced old trapper, the latter proceeded to give his directions to Paul, concerning the arrangements of the contemplated halt. While Inez and Ellen were dismounting, and Middleton and the bee-hunter were attending to their comforts, the discourse was continued, sometimes in the language of the natives, but often, as Paul and the Doctor mingled their opinions with the two principal speakers, in the English tongue. There was a keen and subtle trial of skill between the Pawnee and the trapper, in which each endeavoured to discover the objects of the other, without betraying his own interest in the investigation. As might be expected, when the struggle was between adversaries so equal, the result of the encounter answered the expectations of neither. The latter had put all the interrogatories his ingenuity and practice could suggest, concerning the state of the tribe of the Loups, their crops, their store of provisions for the ensuing winter, and their relations with their different warlike neighbours without extorting any answer, which, in the slightest degree, elucidated the cause of his finding a solitary warrior so far from his people. On the other hand, while the questions of the Indian were far more dignified and delicate, they were equally ingenious. He commented on the state of the trade in peltries, spoke of the good or ill success of many white hunters, whom he had either encountered, or heard named, and even alluded to the steady march, which the nation of his great father, as he cautiously termed the government of the States, was making towards the hunting-grounds of his tribe. It was apparent, however, by the singular mixture of interest, contempt, and indignation, that were occasionally gleaming through the reserved manner of this warrior, that he knew the strange people, who were thus trespassing on his native rights, much more by report than by any actual intercourse. This personal ignorance of the whites was as much betrayed by the manner in which he regarded the females, as by the brief, but energetic, expressions which occasionally escaped him.

While speaking to the trapper he suffered his wandering glances to stray towards the intellectual and nearly infantile beauty of Inez, as one might be supposed to gaze upon the loveliness of an ethereal being. It was very evident that he now saw, for the first time, one of those females, of whom the fathers of his tribe so often spoke, and who were considered of such rare excellence as to equal all that savage ingenuity could imagine in the way of loveliness. His observation of Ellen was less marked, but notwithstanding the warlike and chastened expression of his eye, there was much of the homage, which man is made to pay to woman, even in the more cursory look he sometimes turned on her maturer and perhaps more animated beauty. This admiration, however, was so tempered by his habits, and so smothered in the pride of a warrior, as completely to elude every eye but that of the trapper, who was too well skilled in Indian customs, and was too well instructed in the importance of rightly conceiving, the character of the stranger, to let the smallest trait, or the most trifling of his movements, escape him. In the mean time, the unconscious Ellen herself moved about the feeble and less resolute Inez, with her accustomed assiduity and tenderness, exhibiting in her frank features those changing emotions of joy and regret which occasionally beset her, as her active mind dwelt on the decided step she had just taken, with the contending doubts and hopes, and possibly with some of the mental vacillation, that was natural to her situation and sex.

Not so Paul; conceiving himself to have obtained the two things dearest to his heart, the possession of Ellen and a triumph over the sons of Ishmael, he now enacted his part, in the business of the moment, with as much coolness as though he was already leading his willing bride, from solemnising their nuptials before a border magistrate, to the security of his own dwelling. He had hovered around the moving family, during the tedious period of their weary march, concealing himself by day, and seeking interviews with his betrothed as opportunities offered, in the manner already described, until fortune and his own intrepidity had united to render him successful, at the very moment when he was beginning to despair, and he now cared neither for distance, nor violence, nor hardships. To his sanguine fancy and determined resolution all the rest was easily to be achieved. Such were his feelings, and such in truth they

seemed to be. With his cap cast on one side, and whistling a low air, he thrashed among the bushes, in order to make a place suitable for the females to repose on, while, from time to time, he cast an approving glance at the agile form of Ellen, as she tripped past him, engaged in her own share of the duty.

"And so the Wolf-tribe of the Pawnees have buried the hatchet with their neighbours, the Konzas?" said the trapper, pursuing a discourse which he had scarcely permitted to flag, though it had been occasionally interrupted by the different directions with which he occasionally saw fit to interrupt it. (The reader will remember that, while he spoke to the native warrior in his own tongue, he necessarily addressed his white companions in English.) "The Loups and the light-fac'd Red-skins are again friends. Doctor, that is a tribe of which I'll engage you've often read, and of which many a round lie has been whispered in the ears of the ignorant people, who live in the settlements. There was a story of a nation of Welshers, that liv'd hereaway in the prairies, and how they came into the land afore the uneasy minded man, who first let in the Christians to rob the heathens of their inheritance, had ever dreamt that the sun set on a country as big as that it rose from. And how they knew the white ways, and spoke with white tongues, and a thousand other follies and idle conceits."

"Have I not heard of them?" exclaimed the naturalist, dropping a piece of jerked bison's meat, which he was rather roughly discussing, at the moment. "I should be greatly ignorant not to have often dwelt with delight on so beautiful a theory, and one which so triumphantly establishes two positions, which I have often maintained are unanswerable, even without such living testimony in their favour—viz. that this continent can claim a more remote affinity with civilisation than the time of Columbus, and that colour is the fruit of climate and condition, and not a regulation of nature. Propound the latter question to this Indian gentleman, venerable hunter; he is of a reddish tint himself, and his opinion may be said to make us masters of the two sides of the disputed point."

"Do you think a Pawnee is a reader of books, and a believer of printed lies, like the idlers in the towns?" retorted the old man, laughing. "But it may be as well to humour the likings of the man, which, after all, it is quite possible are neither more nor less than his natural gift, and therefore to be followed, although they may be pitied. What does my brother think? all whom he sees here have pale skins, but the Pawnee warriors are red; does he believe that man changes with the season, and that the son is not like his father?"

The young warrior regarded his interrogator for a moment with a steady and deliberating eye; then raising his finger upward, he answered with dignity—

"The Wahcondah pours the rain from his clouds; when he speaks, he shakes the lulls; and the fire, which scorches the trees, is the anger of his eye; but he fashioned his children with care and thought. What he has thus made, never alters!"

"Ay, 'tis in the reason of natur' that it should be so, Doctor," continued the trapper, when he had interpreted this answer to the disappointed naturalist. "The Pawnees are a wise and a great people, and I'll engage they abound in many a wholesome and honest tradition. The hunters and trappers, that I sometimes see, speak of a great warrior of your race."

"My tribe are not women. A brave is no stranger in my village."

"Ay; but he, they speak of most, is a chief far beyond the renown of common warriors, and one that might have done credit to that once mighty but now fallen people, the Delawares of the hills."

"Such a warrior should have a name?"

"They call him Hard-Heart, from the stoutness of his resolution; and well is he named, if all I have heard of his deeds be true."

The stranger cast a glance, which seemed to read the guileless soul of the old man, as he demanded—

"Has the Pale-face seen the partisan of my people?"

"Never. It is not with me now, as it used to be some forty years ago, when warfare and bloodshed were my calling and my gifts!"

A loud shout from the reckless Paul interrupted his speech, and at the next moment the bee-hunter appeared, leading an Indian war-horse from the side of the thicket opposite to the one occupied by the party.

"Here is a beast for a Red-skin to straddle!" he cried, as he made the animal go through some of its wild paces. "There's not a brigadier in all Kentucky that can call himself master of so sleek and well-jointed a nag! A Spanish saddle too, like a grandee of the Mexicos! and look at the mane and tail, braided and platted down with little silver balls, as if it were Ellen herself getting her shining hair ready for a dance, or a husking frolic! Isn't this a real trotter, old trapper, to eat out of the manger of a savage?"

"Softly, lad, softly. The Loups are famous for their horses, and it is often that you see a warrior on the prairies far better mounted, than a congress-man in the settlements. But this, indeed, is a beast that none but a powerful chief should ride! The saddle, as you rightly think, has been sit upon in its day by a great Spanish captain, who has lost it and his life together, in some of the battles which this people often fight against the southern provinces. I warrant me, I warrant me, the youngster is the son of a great chief; may be of the mighty Hard-Heart himself!"

During this rude interruption to the discourse, the young Pawnee manifested neither impatience nor displeasure; but when he thought his beast had been the subject of sufficient comment, he very coolly, and with the air of one accustomed to have his will respected, relieved Paul of the bridle, and throwing the reins on the neck of the animal, he sprang upon his back, with the activity of a professor of the equestrian art. Nothing could be finer or firmer than the seat of the savage. The highly wrought and cumbrous saddle was evidently more for show than use. Indeed it impeded rather than aided the action of limbs, which disdained to seek assistance, or admit of restraint from so womanish inventions as stirrups. The horse, which immediately began to prance, was, like its rider, wild and untutored in all his motions, but while there was so little of art, there was all the freedom and grace of nature in the movements of both. The animal was probably indebted to the blood of Araby for its excellence, through a long pedigree, that embraced the steed of Mexico, the Spanish barb, and the Moorish charger. The rider, in obtaining his steed from the provinces of Central-America, had also obtained that spirit and grace in controlling him, which unite to form the most intrepid and perhaps the most skilful horseman in the world.

Notwithstanding this sudden occupation of his animal, the Pawnee discovered no hasty wish to depart. More at his ease, and

possibly more independent, now he found himself secure of the means of retreat, he rode back and forth, eyeing the different individuals of the party with far greater freedom than before. But, at each extremity of his ride, just as the sagacious trapper expected to see him profit by his advantage and fly, he would turn his horse, and pass over the same ground, sometimes with the rapidity of the flying deer, and at others more slowly, and with greater dignity of mien and attitude. Anxious to ascertain such facts as might have an influence on his future movements, the old man determined to invite him to a renewal of their conference. He therefore made a gesture expressive at the same time of his wish to resume the interrupted discourse, and of his own pacific intentions. The quick eye of the stranger was not slow to note the action, but it was not until a sufficient time had passed to allow him to debate the prudence of the measure in his own mind, that he seemed willing to trust himself again, so near a party that was so much superior to himself in physical power, and consequently one that was able, at any instant, to command his life, or control his personal liberty. When he did approach nigh enough to converse with facility, it was with a singular mixture of haughtiness and of distrust.

"It is far to the village of the Loups," he said, stretching his arm in a direction contrary to that in which, the trapper well knew, the tribe dwelt, "and the road is crooked. What has the Big-knife to say?"

"Ay, crooked enough!" muttered the old man in English, "if you are to set out on your journey by that path, but not half so winding as the cunning of an Indian's mind. Say, my brother; do the chiefs of the Pawnees love to see strange faces in their lodges?"

The young warrior bent his body gracefully, though but slightly, over the saddle-bow, as he replied—

"When have my people forgotten to give food to the stranger?"

"If I lead my daughters to the doors of the Loups, will the women take them by the hand; and will the warriors smoke with my young men?"

"The country of the Pale-faces is behind them. Why do they journey so far towards the setting sun? Have they lost the path, or are these the women of the white warriors, that I hear are wading up the river of 'the troubled waters?'"

"Neither. They, who wade the Missouri, are the warriors of my great father, who has sent them on his message; but we are peace-runners. The white men and the red are neighbours, and they wish to be friends.—Do not the Omahaws visit the Loups, when the tomahawk is buried in the path between the two nations?"

"The Omahaws are welcome."

"And the Yanktons, and the burnt-wood Tetons, who live in the elbow of the river, 'with muddy water,' do they not come into the lodges of the Loups and smoke?"

"The Tetons are liars!" exclaimed the other. "They dare not shut their eyes in the night. No; they sleep in the sun. See," he added, pointing with fierce triumph to the frightful ornaments of his leggings, "their scalps are so plenty, that the Pawnees tread on them! Go; let a Sioux live in banks of snow; the plains and buffaloes are for men!"

"Ah! the secret is out," said the trapper to Middleton, who was an attentive, because a deeply interested, observer of what was passing. "This good-looking young Indian is scouting on the track of the Siouxes—you may see it by his arrow-heads, and his paint; ay, and by his eye, too; for a Red-skin lets his natur' follow the business he is on, be it for peace, or be it for war,—quiet, Hector, quiet. Have you never scented a Pawnee afore, pup?—keep down, dog—keep down—my brother is right. The Siouxes are thieves. Men of all colours and nations say it of them, and say it truly. But the people from the rising sun are not Siouxes, and they wish to visit the lodges of the Loups."

"The head of my brother is white," returned the Pawnee, throwing one of those glances at the trapper, which were so remarkably expressive of distrust, intelligence, and pride, and then pointing, as he continued, towards the eastern horizon, "and his eyes have looked on many things—can he tell me the name of what he sees yonder—is it a buffaloe?"

"It looks more like a cloud, peeping above the skirt of the plain with the sunshine lighting its edges. It is the smoke of the heavens."

"It is a hill of the earth, and on its top are the lodges of Pale-faces! Let the women of my brother wash their feet among the people of their own colour."

"The eyes of a Pawnee are good, if he can see a white-skin so far."

The Indian turned slowly towards the speaker, and after a pause of a moment he sternly demanded—

"Can my brother hunt?"

"Alas! I claim to be no better than a miserable trapper!"

"When the plain is covered with the buffaloes, can he see them?"

"No doubt, no doubt—it is far easier to see than to take a scampering bull."

"And when the birds are flying from the cold, and the clouds are black with their feathers, can he see them too?"

"Ay, ay, it is not hard to find a duck, or a goose, when millions are darkening the heavens."

"When the snow falls, and covers the lodges of the Long-knives, can the stranger see flakes in the air?"

"My eyes are none of the best now," returned the old man a little resentfully, "but the time has been when I had a name for my sight!"

"The Red-skins find the Big-knives as easily as the strangers see the buffaloe, or the travelling birds, or the falling snow. Your warriors think the Master of Life has made the whole earth white. They are mistaken. They are pale, and it is their own faces that they see. Go! a Pawnee is not blind, that he need look long for your people!"

The warrior suddenly paused, and bent his face aside, like one who listened with all his faculties absorbed in the act. Then turning the head of his horse, he rode to the nearest angle of the thicket, and looked intently across the bleak prairie, in a direction opposite to the side on which the party stood. Returning slowly from this unaccountable, and to his observers, startling procedure, he riveted his

eyes on Inez, and paced back and forth several times, with the air of one who maintained a warm struggle on some difficult point, in the recesses of his own thoughts. He had drawn the reins of his impatient steed, and was seemingly about to speak, when his head again sunk on his chest, and he resumed his former attitude of attention. Galloping like a deer, to the place of his former observations, he rode for a moment swiftly, in short and rapid circles, as if still uncertain of his course, and then darted away, like a bird that had been fluttering around its nest before it takes a distant flight. After scouring the plain for a minute, he was lost to the eye behind a swell of the land.

The hounds, who had also manifested great uneasiness for some time, followed him for a little distance, and then terminated their chase by seating themselves on the ground, and raising their usual low, whining, and warning howls.

## CHAPTER XIX

How if he will not stand?

—Shakspeare.

The several movements, related in the close of the preceding chapter, had passed in so short a space of time, that the old man, while he neglected not to note the smallest incident, had no opportunity of expressing his opinion concerning the stranger's motives. After the Pawnee had disappeared, however, he shook his head and muttered, while he walked slowly to the angle of the thicket that the Indian had just quitted—

“There are both scents and sounds in the air, though my miserable senses are not good enough to hear the one, or to catch the taint of the other.”

“There is nothing to be seen,” cried Middleton, who kept close at his side. “My eyes and my ears are good, and yet I can assure you that I neither hear nor see any thing.”

“Your eyes are good! and you are not deaf!” returned the other with a slight air of contempt; “no, lad, no; they may be good to see across a church, or to hear a town-bell, but afore you had passed a year in these prairies you would find yourself taking a turkey for a buffaloe, or conceiting, fifty times, that the roar of a buffaloe bull was the thunder of the Lord! There is a deception of natur' in these naked plains, in which the air throws up the images like water, and then it is hard to tell the prairies from a sea. But yonder is a sign that a hunter never fails to know!”

The trapper pointed to a flight of vultures, that were sailing over the plain at no great distance, and apparently in the direction in which the Pawnee had riveted his eye. At first Middleton could not distinguish the small dark objects, that were dotting the dusky clouds, but as they came swiftly onward, first their forms, and then their heavy waving wings, became distinctly visible.

“Listen,” said the trapper, when he had succeeded in making Middleton see the moving column of birds. “Now you hear the buffaloes, or bisons, as your knowing Doctor sees fit to call them, though buffaloes is their name among all the hunters of these regions. And, I conclude, that a hunter is a better judge of a beast and of its name,” he added, winking to the young soldier, “than any man who has turned over the leaves of a book, instead of travelling over the face of the 'arth, in order to find out the natur's of its inhabitants.”

“Of their habits, I will grant you,” cried the naturalist, who rarely missed an opportunity to agitate any disputed point in his favourite studies. “That is, provided always, deference is had to the proper use of definitions, and that they are contemplated with scientific eyes.”

“Eyes of a mole! as if man's eyes were not as good for names as the eyes of any other creatur! Who named the works of His hand? can you tell me that, with your books and college wisdom? Was it not the first man in the Garden, and is it not a plain consequence that his children inherit his gifts?”

“That is certainly the Mosaic account of the event,” said the Doctor; “though your reading is by far too literal!”

“My reading! nay, if you suppose, that I have wasted my time in schools, you do such a wrong to my knowledge, as one mortal should never lay to the door of another without sufficient reason. If I have ever craved the art of reading, it has been that I might better know the sayings of the book you name, for it is a book which speaks, in every line, according to human feelings, and therein according to reason.”

“And do you then believe,” said the Doctor a little provoked by the dogmatism of his stubborn adversary, and perhaps, secretly, too confident in his own more liberal, though scarcely as profitable, attainments,—“do you then believe that all these beasts were literally collected in a garden, to be enrolled in the nomenclature of the first man?”

“Why not? I understand your meaning; for it is not needful to live in towns to hear all the devilish devices, that the conceit of man can invent to upset his own happiness. What does it prove, except indeed it may be said to prove that the garden He made was not after the miserable fashions of our times, thereby directly giving the lie to what the world calls its civilising? No, no, the garden of the Lord was the forest then, and is the forest now, where the fruits do grow, and the birds do sing, according to his own wise ordering. Now, lady, you may see the mystery of the vultures! There come the buffaloes themselves, and a noble herd it is! I warrant me, that Pawnee has a troop of his people in some of the hollows, nigh by; and as he has gone scampering after them, you are about to see a glorious chase. It will serve to keep the squatter and his brood under cover, and for ourselves there is little reason to fear. A Pawnee is not apt to be a malicious savage.”

Every eye was now drawn to the striking spectacle that succeeded. Even the timid Inez hastened to the side of Middleton to gaze at the sight, and Paul summoned Ellen from her culinary labours, to become a witness of the lively scene.

Throughout the whole of those moving events, which it has been our duty to record, the prairies had lain in the majesty of perfect solitude. The heavens had been blackened with the passage of the migratory birds, it is true, but the dogs of the party, and the ass of the doctor, were the only quadrupeds that had enlivened the broad surface of the waste beneath. There was now a sudden exhibition of animal life, which changed the scene, as it were, by magic, to the very opposite extreme.

A few enormous bison bulls were first observed, scouring along the most distant roll of the prairie, and then succeeded long files of single beasts, which, in their turns, were followed by a dark mass of bodies, until the dun-coloured herbage of the plain was entirely lost, in the deeper hue of their shaggy coats. The herd, as the column spread and thickened, was like the endless flocks of the smaller birds, whose extended flanks are so often seen to heave up out of the abyss of the heavens, until they appear as countless as the leaves

in those forests, over which they wing their endless flight. Clouds of dust shot up in little columns from the centre of the mass, as some animal, more furious than the rest, ploughed the plain with his horns, and, from time to time, a deep hollow bellowing was borne along on the wind, as if a thousand throats vented their complaints in a discordant murmuring.

A long and musing silence reigned in the party, as they gazed on this spectacle of wild and peculiar grandeur. It was at length broken by the trapper, who, having been long accustomed to similar sights, felt less of its influence, or, rather, felt it in a less thrilling and absorbing manner, than those to whom the scene was more novel.

"There go ten thousand oxen in one drove, without keeper or master, except Him who made them, and gave them these open plains for their pasture! Ay, it is here that man may see the proofs of his wantonness and folly! Can the proudest governor in all the States go into his fields, and slaughter a nobler bullock than is here offered to the meanest hand; and when he has gotten his sirloin, or his steak, can he eat it with as good a relish as he who has sweetened his food with wholesome toil, and earned it according to the law of nature, by honestly mastering that which the Lord hath put before him?"

"If the prairie platter is smoking with a buffalo's hump, I answer, No," interrupted the luxurious bee-hunter.

"Ay, boy, you have tasted, and you feel the genuine reasoning of the thing! But the herd is heading a little this-a-way, and it behoves us to make ready for their visit. If we hide ourselves, altogether, the horned brutes will break through the place and trample us beneath their feet, like so many creeping worms; so we will just put the weak ones apart, and take post, as becomes men and hunters, in the van."

As there was but little time to make the necessary arrangements, the whole party set about them in good earnest. Inez and Ellen were placed in the edge of the thicket on the side farthest from the approaching herd. Asinus was posted in the centre, in consideration of his nerves, and then the old man, with his three male companions, divided themselves in such a manner as they thought would enable them to turn the head of the rushing column, should it chance to approach too nigh their position. By the vacillating movements of some fifty or a hundred bulls, that led the advance, it remained questionable, for many moments, what course they intended to pursue. But a tremendous and painful roar, which came from behind the cloud of dust that rose in the centre of the herd, and which was horribly answered by the screams of the carrion birds, that were greedily sailing directly above the flying drove, appeared to give a new impulse to their flight, and at once to remove every symptom of indecision. As if glad to seek the smallest signs of the forest, the whole of the affrighted herd became steady in its direction, rushing in a straight line toward the little cover of bushes, which has already been so often named.

The appearance of danger was now, in reality, of a character to try the stoutest nerves. The flanks of the dark, moving mass, were advanced in such a manner as to make a concave line of the front, and every fierce eye, that was glaring from the shaggy wilderness of hair in which the entire heads of the males were enveloped, was riveted with mad anxiety on the thicket. It seemed as if each beast strove to outstrip his neighbour, in gaining this desired cover; and as thousands in the rear pressed blindly on those in front, there was the appearance of an imminent risk that the leaders of the herd would be precipitated on the concealed party, in which case the destruction of every one of them was certain. Each of our adventurers felt the danger of his situation in a manner peculiar to his individual character and circumstances.

Middleton wavered. At times he felt inclined to rush through the bushes, and, seizing Inez, attempt to fly. Then recollecting the impossibility of outstripping the furious speed of an alarmed bison, he felt for his arms, determined to make head against the countless drove. The faculties of Dr. Battius were quickly wrought up to the very summit of mental delusion. The dark forms of the herd lost their distinctness, and then the naturalist began to fancy he beheld a wild collection of all the creatures of the world, rushing upon him in a body, as if to revenge the various injuries, which in the course of a life of indefatigable labour in behalf of the natural sciences, he had inflicted on their several genera. The paralysis it occasioned in his system, was like the effect of the incubus. Equally unable to fly or to advance, he stood riveted to the spot, until the infatuation became so complete, that the worthy naturalist was beginning, by a desperate effort of scientific resolution, even to class the different specimens. On the other hand, Paul shouted, and called on Ellen to come and assist him in shouting, but his voice was lost in the bellowings and trampling of the herd. Furious, and yet strangely excited by the obstinacy of the brutes and the wildness of the sight, and nearly maddened by sympathy and a species of unconscious apprehension, in which the claims of nature were singularly mingled with concern for his mistress, he nearly split his throat in exhorting his aged friend to interfere.

"Come forth, old trapper," he shouted, "with your prairie inventions! or we shall be all smothered under a mountain of buffalo humps!"

The old man, who had stood all this while leaning on his rifle, and regarding the movements of the herd with a steady eye, now deemed it time to strike his blow. Levelling his piece at the foremost bull, with an agility that would have done credit to his youth, he fired. The animal received the bullet on the matted hair between his horns, and fell to his knees; but shaking his head he instantly arose, the very shock seeming to increase his exertions. There was now no longer time to hesitate. Throwing down his rifle, the trapper stretched forth his arms, and advanced from the cover with naked hands, directly towards the rushing column of the beasts.

The figure of a man, when sustained by the firmness and steadiness that intellect can only impart, rarely fails of commanding respect from all the inferior animals of the creation. The leading bulls recoiled, and for a single instant there was a sudden stop to their speed, a dense mass of bodies rolling up in front, until hundreds were seen floundering and tumbling on the plain. Then came another of those hollow bellowings from the rear, and set the herd again in motion. The head of the column, however, divided. The immovable form of the trapper, cutting it, as it were, into two gliding streams of life. Middleton and Paul instantly profited by his example, and extended the feeble barrier by a similar exhibition of their own persons.

For a few moments, the new impulse given to the animals in front, served to protect the thicket. But, as the body of the herd pressed more and more upon the open line of its defenders, and the dust thickened, so as to obscure their persons, there was, at each instant, a renewed danger of the beasts breaking through. It became necessary for the trapper and his companions to become still more and more alert; and they were gradually yielding before the headlong multitude, when a furious bull darted by Middleton, so near as to brush his

person, and, at the next instant, swept through the thicket with the velocity of the wind.

"Close, and die for the ground," shouted the old man, "or a thousand of the devils will be at his heels!"

All their efforts would have proved fruitless, however, against the living torrent, had not Asinus, whose domains had just been so rudely entered, lifted his voice, in the midst of the uproar. The most sturdy and furious of the bulls trembled at the alarming and unknown cry, and then each individual brute was seen madly pressing from that very thicket, which, the moment before, he had endeavoured to reach, with the eagerness with which the murderer seeks the sanctuary.

As the stream divided, the place became clear; the two dark columns moving obliquely from the copse, to unite again at the distance of a mile, on its opposite side. The instant the old man saw the sudden effect which the voice of Asinus had produced, he coolly commenced reloading his rifle, indulging at the same time in a heartfelt fit of his silent and peculiar merriment.

"There they go, like dogs with so many half-filled shot-pouches dangling at their tails, and no fear of their breaking their order; for what the brutes in the rear didn't hear with their own ears, they'll conceit they did: besides, if they change their minds, it may be no hard matter to get the Jack to sing the rest of his tune!"

"The ass has spoken, but Balaam is silent!" cried the bee-hunter, catching his breath after a repeated burst of noisy mirth, that might possibly have added to the panic of the buffaloes by its vociferation. "The man is as completely dumb-founded, as if a swarm of young bees had settled on the end of his tongue, and he not willing to speak, for fear of their answer."

"How now, friend," continued the trapper, addressing the still motionless and entranced naturalist; "how now, friend; are you, who make your livelihood by booking the names and natur's of the beasts of the fields and the fowls of the air, frightened at a herd of scampering buffaloes? Though, perhaps, you are ready to dispute my right to call them by a word, that is in the mouth of every hunter and trader on the frontier!"

The old man was however mistaken, in supposing he could excite the benumbed faculties of the Doctor, by provoking a discussion. From that time, henceforth, he was never known, except on one occasion, to utter a word that indicated either the species, or the genus, of the animal. He obstinately refused the nutritious food of the whole ox family, and even to the present hour, now that he is established in all the scientific dignity and security of a savant in one of the maritime towns, he turns his back with a shudder on those delicious and unrivalled viands, that are so often seen at the suppers of the craft, and which are unequalled by any thing, that is served under the same name, at the boasted chop-houses of London, or at the most renowned of the Parisian restaurants. In short, the distaste of the worthy naturalist for beef was not unlike that which the shepherd sometimes produces, by first muzzling and fettering his delinquent dog, and then leaving him as a stepping stone for the whole flock to use in its transit over a wall, or through the opening of a sheep-fold; a process which is said to produce in the culprit a species of surfeit, on the subject of mutton, for ever after. By the time Paul and the trapper saw fit to terminate the fresh bursts of merriment, which the continued abstraction of their learned companion did not fail to excite, he commenced breathing again, as if the suspended action of his lungs had been renewed by the application of a pair of artificial bellows, and was heard to make use of the ever afterwards proscribed term, on that solitary occasion, to which we have just alluded.

"Boves Americani horridi!" exclaimed the Doctor, laying great stress on the latter word; after which he continued mute, like one who pondered on strange and unaccountable events.

"Ay, horrid eyes enough, I will willingly allow," returned the trapper; "and altogether the creatur' has a frightful look, to one unused to the sights and bustle of a natural life; but then the courage of the beast is in no way equal to its countenance. Lord, man, if you should once get fairly beset by a brood of grizzly bears, as happened to Hector and I, at the great falls of the Miss—Ah, here comes the tail of the herd, and yonder goes a pack of hungry wolves, ready to pick up the sick, or such as get a disjointed neck by a tumble. Ha! there are mounted men on their trail, or I'm no sinner! here, lad; you may see them here-away, just where the dust is scattering afore the wind. They are hovering around a wounded buffalo, making an end of the surly devil with their arrows!"

Middleton and Paul soon caught a glimpse of the dark group, that the quick eye of the old man had so readily detected. Some fifteen or twenty horsemen were, in truth, to be seen riding, in quick circuits, about a noble bull, which stood at bay, too grievously hurt to fly, and yet seeming to disdain to fall, notwithstanding his hardy body had already been the target for a hundred arrows. A thrust from the lance of a powerful Indian, however, completed his conquest, and the brute gave up his obstinate hold of life with a roar, that passed bellowing over the place where our adventurers stood, and, reaching the ears of the affrighted herd, added a new impulse to their flight.

"How well the Pawnee knew the philosophy of a buffalo hunt!" said the old man, after he had stood regarding the animated scene for a few moments, with evident satisfaction. "You saw how he went off like the wind before the drove. It was in order that he might not taint the air, and that he might turn the flank, and join—Ha! how is this! yonder Red-skins are no Pawnees! The feathers in their heads are from the wings and tails of owls.—Ah! as I am but a miserable, half-sighted, trapper, it is a band of the accursed Siouzes! To cover, lads, to cover. A single cast of an eye this-a-way, would strip us of every rag of clothes, as surely as the lightning scorches the bush, and it might be that our very lives would be far from safe."

Middleton had already turned from the spectacle, to seek that which pleased him better; the sight of his young and beautiful bride. Paul seized the Doctor by the arm; and, as the trapper followed with the smallest possible delay, the whole party was quickly collected within the cover of the thicket. After a few short explanations concerning the character of this new danger, the old man, on whom the whole duty of directing their movements was devolved, in deference to his great experience, continued his discourse as follows—

"This is a region, as you must all know, where a strong arm is far better than the right, and where the white law is as little known as needed. Therefore does every thing, now, depend on judgment and power. If," he continued, laying his finger on his cheek, like one who considered deeply all sides of the embarrassing situation in which he found himself,—“if an invention could be framed, which would set these Siouzes and the brood of the squatter by the ears, then might we come in, like the buzzards after a fight atween the beasts, and pick up the gleanings of the ground—there are Pawnees nigh us, too! It is a certain matter, for yonder lad is not so far from his village without an errand. Here are therefore four parties within sound of a cannon, not one of whom can trust the other. All which



makes movement a little difficult, in a district where covers are far from plenty. But we are three well-armed, and I think I may see three stout-hearted men—”

“Four,” interrupted Paul.

“Anan,” said the old man, looking up simply at his companion.

“Four,” repeated the bee-hunter, pointing to the naturalist.

“Every army has its hangers-on and idlers,” rejoined the blunt border-man. “Friend, it will be necessary to slaughter this ass.”

“To slay Asinus! such a deed would be an act of supererogatory cruelty.”

“I know nothing of your words, which hide their meaning in sound; but that is cruel which sacrifices a Christian to a brute. This is what I call the reason of mercy. It would be just as safe to blow a trumpet, as to let the animal raise his voice again, inasmuch as it would prove a manifest challenge to the Siouxes.”

“I will answer for the discretion of Asinus, who seldom speaks without a reason.”

“They say a man can be known by the company he keeps,” retorted the old man, “and why not a brute? I once made a forced march, and went through a great deal of jeopardy, with a companion who never opened his mouth but to sing; and trouble enough and great concern of mind did the fellow give me. It was in that very business with your grand’ther, captain. But then he had a human throat, and well did he know how to use it, on occasion, though he didn’t always stop to regard the time and seasons fit for such outcries. Ah’s me! if I was now, as I was then, it wouldn’t be a band of thieving Siouxes that should easily drive me from such a lodgment as this! But what signifies boasting, when sight and strength are both failing. The warrior, that the Delawares once saw fit to call after the Hawk, for the goodness of his eyes, would now be better termed the Mole! In my judgment, therefore, it will be well to slay the brute.”

“There’s argument and good logic in it,” said Paul; “music is music, and it’s always noisy, whether it comes from a fiddle or a jackass. Therefore I agree with the old man, and say, Kill the beast.”

“Friends,” said the naturalist, looking with a sorrowful eye from one to another of his bloodily disposed companions, “slay not Asinus; he is a specimen of his kind, of whom much good and little evil can be said. Hardy and docile for his genus; abstemious and patient, even for his humble species. We have journeyed much together, and his death would grieve me. How would it trouble thy spirit, venerable venator, to separate, in such an untimely manner, from your faithful hound?”

“The animal shall not die,” said the old man, suddenly clearing his throat, in a manner that proved he felt the force of the appeal; “but his voice must be smothered. Bind his jaws with the halter, and then I think we may trust the rest to Providence.”

With this double security for the discretion of Asinus, for Paul instantly bound the muzzle of the ass in the manner required, the trapper seemed content. After which he proceeded to the margin of the thicket to reconnoitre.

The uproar, which attended the passage of the herd, was now gone, or rather it was heard rolling along the prairie, at the distance of a mile. The clouds of dust were already blown away by the wind, and a clear range was left to the eye, in that place where ten minutes before there existed a scene of so much wildness and confusion.

The Siouxes had completed their conquest, and, apparently satisfied with this addition to the numerous previous captures they had made, they now seemed content to let the remainder of the herd escape. A dozen remained around the carcass, over which a few buzzards were balancing themselves with steady wings and greedy eyes, while the rest were riding about, in quest of such further booty as might come in their way, on the trail of so vast a drove. The trapper measured the proportions, and scanned the equipments of such individuals as drew nearer to the side of the thicket, with careful eyes. At length he pointed out one among them, to Middleton, as Weucha.

“Now, know we not only who they are, but their errand,” the old man continued, deliberately shaking his head. “They have lost the trail of the squatter, and are on its hunt. These buffaloes have crossed their path, and in chasing the animals, bad luck has led them in open sight of the hill on which the brood of Ishmael have harboured. Do you see yon birds watching for the offals of the beast they have killed? Therein is a moral, which teaches the manner of a prairie life. A band of Pawnees are outlying for these very Siouxes, as you see the buzzards looking down for their food, and it behoves us, as Christian men who have so much at stake, to look down upon them both. Ha! what brings yonder two skirting reptiles to a stand? As you live, they have found the place where the miserable son of the squatter met his death!”

The old man was not mistaken. Weucha, and a savage who accompanied him, had reached that spot, which has already been mentioned as furnishing the frightful evidences of violence and bloodshed. There they sat on their horses, examining the well-known signs, with the intelligence that distinguishes the habits of Indians. Their scrutiny was long, and apparently not without distrust. At length they raised a cry, that was scarcely less piteous and startling than that which the hounds had before made over the same fatal signs, and which did not fail to draw the whole band immediately around them, as the fell bark of the jackal is said to gather his comrades to the chase.

## CHAPTER XX

Welcome, ancient Pistol.

—Shakspeare.

It was not long before the trapper pointed out the commanding person of Mahtoree, as the leader of the Siouzes. This chief, who had been among the last to obey the vociferous summons of Weucha, no sooner reached the spot where his whole party was now gathered, than he threw himself from his horse, and proceeded to examine the marks of the extraordinary trail, with that degree of dignity and attention which became his high and responsible station. The warriors, for it was but too evident that they were to a man of that fearless and ruthless class, awaited the result of his investigation with patient reserve; none but a few of the principal braves, presuming even to speak, while their leader was thus gravely occupied. It was several minutes before Mahtoree seemed satisfied. He then directed his eyes along the ground to those several places where Ishmael had found the same revolting evidences of the passage of some bloody struggle, and motioned to his people to follow.

The whole band advanced in a body towards the thicket, until they came to a halt, within a few yards of the precise spot, where Esther had stimulated her sluggish sons to break into the cover. The reader will readily imagine that the trapper and his companions were not indifferent observers of so threatening a movement. The old man summoned all who were capable of bearing arms to his side, and demanded, in very unequivocal terms, though in a voice that was suitably lowered, in order to escape the ears of their dangerous neighbours, whether they were disposed to make battle for their liberty, or whether they should try the milder expedient of conciliation. As it was a subject in which all had an equal interest, he put the question as to a council of war, and not without some slight exhibition of the lingering vestiges of a nearly extinct military pride. Paul and the Doctor were diametrically opposed to each other in opinion; the former declaring for an immediate appeal to arms, and the latter was warmly espousing the policy of pacific measures. Middleton, who saw that there was great danger of a hot verbal dispute between two men, who were governed by feelings so diametrically opposed, saw fit to assume the office of arbiter; or rather to decide the question, his situation making him a sort of umpire. He also leaned to the side of peace, for he evidently saw that, in consequence of the vast superiority of their enemies, violence would irretrievably lead to their destruction.

The trapper listened to the reasons of the young soldier with great attention; and, as they were given with the steadiness of one who did not suffer apprehension to blind his judgment, they did not fail to produce a suitable impression.

"It is rational," rejoined the trapper, when the other had delivered his reasons; "it is very rational, for what man cannot move with his strength he must circumvent with his wits. It is reason that makes him stronger than the buffalo, and swifter than the moose. Now stay you here, and keep yourselves close. My life and my traps are but of little value, when the welfare of so many human souls are concerned; and, moreover, I may say that I know the windings of Indian cunning. Therefore will I go alone upon the prairie. It may so happen, that I can yet draw the eyes of a Sioux from this spot and give you time and room to fly."

As if resolved to listen to no remonstrance, the old man quietly shouldered his rifle, and moving leisurely through the thicket, he issued on the plain, at a point whence he might first appear before the eyes of the Siouzes, without exciting their suspicions that he came from its cover.

The instant that the figure of a man dressed in the garb of a hunter, and bearing the well known and much dreaded rifle, appeared before the eyes of the Siouzes, there was a sensible, though a suppressed sensation in the band. The artifice of the trapper had so far succeeded, as to render it extremely doubtful whether he came from some point on the open prairie, or from the thicket; though the Indians still continued to cast frequent and suspicious glances at the cover. They had made their halt at the distance of an arrow-flight from the bushes; but when the stranger came sufficiently nigh to show that the deep coating of red and brown, which time and exposure had given to his features, was laid upon the original colour of a Pale-face, they slowly receded from the spot, until they reached a distance that might defeat the aim of fire-arms.

In the mean time the old man continued to advance, until he had got nigh enough to make himself heard without difficulty. Here he stopped, and dropping his rifle to the earth, he raised his hand with the palm outward, in token of peace. After uttering a few words of reproach to his hound, who watched the savage group with eyes that seemed to recognise them, he spoke in the Sioux tongue—

"My brothers are welcome," he said, cunningly constituting himself the master of the region in which they had met, and assuming the offices of hospitality. "They are far from their villages, and are hungry. Will they follow to my lodge, to eat and sleep?"

No sooner was his voice heard, than the yell of pleasure, which burst from a dozen mouths, convinced the sagacious trapper, that he also was recognised. Feeling that it was too late to retreat, he profited by the confusion which prevailed among them, while Weucha was explaining his character, to advance, until he was again face to face with the redoubtable Mahtoree. The second interview between these two men, each of whom was extraordinary in his way, was marked by the usual caution of the frontiers. They stood, for nearly a minute, examining each other without speaking.

"Where are your young men?" sternly demanded the Teton chieftain, after he found that the immovable features of the trapper refused to betray any of their master's secrets, under his intimidating look.

"The Long-knives do not come in bands to trap the beaver? I am alone."

"Your head is white, but you have a forked tongue. Mahtoree has been in your camp. He knows that you are not alone. Where is your young wife, and the warrior that I found upon the prairie?"

"I have no wife. I have told my brother that the woman and her friend were strangers. The words of a grey head should be heard, and not forgotten. The Dahcotahs found travellers asleep, and they thought they had no need of horses. The women and children of a Pale-

face are not used to go far on foot. Let them be sought where you left them.”

The eyes of the Teton flashed fire as he answered—

“They are gone: but Mahtoree is a wise chief, and his eyes can see a great distance!”

“Does the partisan of the Tetons see men on these naked fields?” retorted the trapper, with great steadiness of mien. “I am very old, and my eyes grow dim. Where do they stand?” The chief remained silent a moment, as if he disdained to contest any further the truth of a fact, concerning which he was already satisfied. Then pointing to the traces on the earth, he said, with a sudden transition to mildness, in his eye and manner—

“My father has learnt wisdom, in many winters; can he tell me whose moccasin has left this trail?”

“There have been wolves and buffaloes on the prairies; and there may have been cougars too.”

Mahtoree glanced his eye at the thicket, as if he thought the latter suggestion not impossible. Pointing to the place, he ordered his young men to reconnoitre it more closely, cautioning them, at the same time, with a stern look at the trapper, to beware of treachery from the Big-knives. Three or four half-naked, eager-looking youths lashed their horses at the word, and darted away to obey the mandate. The old man trembled a little for the discretion of Paul, when he saw this demonstration. The Tetons encircled the place two or three times, approaching nigher and nigher at each circuit, and then galloped back to their leader to report that the copse seemed empty. Notwithstanding the trapper watched the eye of Mahtoree, to detect the inward movements of his mind, and if possible to anticipate, in order to direct his suspicions, the utmost sagacity of one so long accustomed to study the cold habits of the Indian race, could however detect no symptom, or expression, that denoted how far he credited or distrusted this intelligence. Instead of replying to the information of his scouts, he spoke kindly to his horse, and motioning to a youth to receive the bridle, or rather halter, by which he governed the animal, he took the trapper by the arm, and led him a little apart from the rest of the band.

“Has my brother been a warrior?” said the wily Teton, in a tone that he intended should be conciliating.

“Do the leaves cover the trees in the season of fruits? Go. The Dahcotahs have not seen as many warriors living as I have looked on in their blood! But what signifies idle remembrancing,” he added in English, “when limbs grow stiff, and sight is failing!”

The chief regarded him a moment with a severe look, as if he would lay bare the falsehood he had heard; but meeting in the calm eye and steady mien of the trapper a confirmation of the truth of what he said, he took the hand of the old man and laid it gently on his head, in token of the respect that was due to the other's years and experience.

“Why then do the Big-knives tell their red brethren to bury the tomahawk,” he said, “when their own young men never forget that they are braves, and meet each other so often with bloody hands?”

“My nation is more numerous than the buffaloes on the prairies, or the pigeons in the air. Their quarrels are frequent; yet their warriors are few. None go out on the war-path but they who are gifted with the qualities of a brave, and therefore such see many battles.”

“It is not so—my father is mistaken,” returned Mahtoree, indulging in a smile of exulting penetration, at the very instant he corrected the force of his denial, in deference to the years and services of one so aged. “The Big-knives are very wise, and they are men; all of them would be warriors. They would leave the Red-skins to dig roots and hoe the corn. But a Dahcotah is not born to live like a woman; he must strike the Pawnee and the Omahaw, or he will lose the name of his fathers.”

“The Master of Life looks with an open eye on his children, who die in a battle that is fought for the right; but he is blind, and his ears are shut to the cries of an Indian, who is killed when plundering, or doing evil to his neighbour.”

“My father is old,” said Mahtoree, looking at his aged companion, with an expression of irony, that sufficiently denoted he was one of those who overstep the trammels of education, and who are perhaps a little given to abuse the mental liberty they thus obtain. “He is very old: has he made a journey to the far country; and has he been at the trouble to come back, to tell the young men what he has seen?”

“Teton,” returned the trapper, throwing the breach of his rifle to the earth with startling vehemence, and regarding his companion with steady serenity, “I have heard that there are men, among my people, who study their great medicines until they believe themselves to be gods, and who laugh at all faith except in their own vanities. It may be true. It is true; for I have seen them. When man is shut up in towns and schools, with his own follies, it may be easy to believe himself greater than the Master of Life; but a warrior, who lives in a house with the clouds for its roof, where he can at any moment look both at the heavens and at the earth, and who daily sees the power of the Great Spirit, should be more humble. A Dahcotah chieftain ought to be too wise to laugh at justice.”

The crafty Mahtoree, who saw that his free-thinking was not likely to produce a favourable impression on the old man, instantly changed his ground, by alluding to the more immediate subject of their interview. Laying his hand gently on the shoulder of the trapper, he led him forward, until they both stood within fifty feet of the margin of the thicket. Here he fastened his penetrating eyes on the other's honest countenance, and continued the discourse—

“If my father has hid his young men in the bush, let him tell them to come forth. You see that a Dahcotah is not afraid. Mahtoree is a great chief! A warrior, whose head is white, and who is about to go to the Land of Spirits, cannot have a tongue with two ends, like a serpent.”

“Dahcotah, I have told no lie. Since the Great Spirit made me a man, I have lived in the wilderness, or on these naked plains, without lodge or family. I am a hunter and go on my path alone.”

“My father has a good carabine. Let him point it in the bush and fire.”

The old man hesitated a moment, and then slowly prepared himself to give this delicate assurance of the truth of what he said, without which he plainly perceived the suspicions of his crafty companion could not be lulled. As he lowered his rifle, his eye, although greatly dimmed and weakened by age, ran over the confused collection of objects, that lay embedded amid the party-coloured foliage of the thicket, until it succeeded in catching a glimpse of the brown covering of the stem of a small tree. With this object in

view, he raised the piece to a level and fired. The bullet had no sooner glided from the barrel than a tremor seized the hands of the trapper, which, had it occurred a moment sooner, would have utterly disqualified him for so hazardous an experiment. A frightful silence succeeded the report, during which he expected to hear the shrieks of the females, and then, as the smoke whirled away in the wind, he caught a view of the fluttering bark, and felt assured that all his former skill was not entirely departed from him. Dropping the piece to the earth, he turned again to his companion with an air of the utmost composure, and demanded—

“Is my brother satisfied?”

“Mahtoree is a chief of the Dahcotahs,” returned the cunning Teton, laying his hand on his chest, in acknowledgment of the other's sincerity. “He knows that a warrior, who has smoked at so many council-fires, until his head has grown white, would not be found in wicked company. But did not my father once ride on a horse, like a rich chief of the Pale-faces, instead of travelling on foot like a hungry Konza?”

“Never! The Wahcondah has given me legs, and he has given me resolution to use them. For sixty summers and winters did I journey in the woods of America, and ten tiresome years have I dwelt on these open fields, without finding need to call often upon the gifts of the other creatur's of the Lord to carry me from place to place.”

“If my father has so long lived in the shade, why has he come upon the prairies? The sun will scorch him.”

The old man looked sorrowfully about for a moment, and then turning with a confidential air to the other, he replied—

“I passed the spring, summer, and autumn of life among the trees. The winter of my days had come, and found me where I loved to be, in the quiet—ay, and in the honesty of the woods! Teton, then I slept happily, where my eyes could look up through the branches of the pines and the beeches, to the very dwelling of the Good Spirit of my people. If I had need to open my heart to him, while his fires were burning above my head, the door was open and before my eyes. But the axes of the choppers awoke me. For a long time my ears heard nothing but the uproar of clearings. I bore it like a warrior and a man; there was a reason that I should bear it: but when that reason was ended, I bethought me to get beyond the accursed sounds. It was trying to the courage and to the habits, but I had heard of these vast and naked fields, and I came hither to escape the wasteful temper of my people. Tell me, Dahcotah, have I not done well?”

The trapper laid his long lean finger on the naked shoulder of the Indian as he ended, and seemed to demand his felicitations on his ingenuity and success, with a ghastly smile, in which triumph was singularly blended with regret. His companion listened intently, and replied to the question by saying, in the sententious manner of his race—

“The head of my father is very grey; he has always lived with men, and he has seen everything. What he does is good; what he speaks is wise. Now let him say, is he sure that he is a stranger to the Big-knives, who are looking for their beasts on every side of the prairies and cannot find them?”

“Dahcotah, what I have said is true. I live alone, and never do I mingle with men whose skins are white, if—”

His mouth was suddenly closed by an interruption that was as mortifying as it was unexpected. The words were still on his tongue, when the bushes on the side of the thicket where they stood, opened, and the whole of the party whom he had just left, and in whose behalf he was endeavouring to reconcile his love of truth to the necessity of prevaricating, came openly into view. A pause of mute astonishment succeeded this unlooked-for spectacle. Then Mahtoree, who did not suffer a muscle or a joint to betray the wonder and surprise he actually experienced, motioned towards the advancing friends of the trapper with an air of assumed civility, and a smile, that lighted his fierce, dark, visage, as the glare of the setting sun reveals the volume and load of the cloud, that is charged to bursting with the electric fluid. He however disdained to speak, or to give any other evidence of his intentions than by calling to his side the distant band, who sprang forward at his beck, with the alacrity of willing subordinates.

In the mean time the friends of the old man continued to advance. Middleton himself was foremost, supporting the light and aerial looking figure of Inez, on whose anxious countenance he cast such occasional glances of tender interest as, in similar circumstances, a father would have given to his child. Paul led Ellen, close in their rear. But while the eye of the bee-hunter did not neglect his blooming companion, it scowled angrily, resembling more the aspect of the sullen and retreating bear than the soft intelligence of a favoured suitor. Obed and Asinus came last, the former leading his companion with a degree of fondness that could hardly be said to be exceeded by any other of the party. The approach of the naturalist was far less rapid than that of those who preceded him. His feet seemed equally reluctant to advance, or to remain stationary; his position bearing a great analogy to that of Mahomet's coffin, with the exception that the quality of repulsion rather than that of attraction held him in a state of rest. The repulsive power in his rear however appeared to predominate, and by a singular exception, as he would have said himself, to all philosophical principles, it rather increased than diminished by distance. As the eyes of the naturalist steadily maintained a position that was the opposite of his route, they served to give a direction to those of the observers of all these movements, and at once furnished a sufficient clue by which to unravel the mystery of so sudden a debouchement from the cover.

Another cluster of stout and armed men was seen at no great distance, just rounding a point of the thicket, and moving directly though cautiously towards the place where the band of the Siouxes was posted, as a squadron of cruisers is often seen to steer across the waste of waters, towards the rich but well-protected convoy. In short, the family of the squatter, or at least such among them as were capable of bearing arms, appeared in view, on the broad prairie, evidently bent on revenging their wrongs.

Mahtoree and his party slowly retired from the thicket, the moment they caught a view of the strangers, until they halted on a swell that commanded a wide and unobstructed view of the naked fields on which they stood. Here the Dahcotah appeared disposed to make his stand, and to bring matters to an issue. Notwithstanding this retreat, in which he compelled the trapper to accompany him, Middleton still advanced, until he too halted on the same elevation, and within speaking distance of the warlike Siouxes. The borderers in their turn took a favourable position, though at a much greater distance. The three groups now resembled so many fleets at sea, lying with their topsails to the masts, with the commendable precaution of reconnoitring, before each could ascertain who among the strangers might be considered as friends, and who as foes.

During this moment of suspense, the dark, threatening, eye of Mahtoree rolled from one of the strange parties to the other, in keen

and hasty examination, and then it turned its withering look on the old man, as the chief said, in a tone of high and bitter scorn—

“The Big-knives are fools! It is easier to catch the cougar asleep, than to find a blind Dahcotah. Did the white head think to ride on the horse of a Sioux?”

The trapper, who had found time to collect his perplexed faculties, saw at once that Middleton, having perceived Ishmael on the trail by which they had fled, preferred trusting to the hospitality of the savages, than to the treatment he would be likely to receive from the hands of the squatter. He therefore disposed himself to clear the way for the favourable reception of his friends, since he found that the unnatural coalition became necessary to secure the liberty, if not the lives, of the party.

“Did my brother ever go on a war-path to strike my people?” he calmly demanded of the indignant chief, who still awaited his reply.

The lowering aspect of the Teton warrior so far lost its severity, as to suffer a gleam of pleasure and triumph to lighten its ferocity, as sweeping his arm in an entire circle around his person he answered—

“What tribe or nation has not felt the blows of the Dahcotahs? Mahtoree is their partisan.”

“And has he found the Big-knives women, or has he found them men?”

A multitude of fierce passions were struggling in the tawny countenance of the Indian. For a moment inextinguishable hatred seemed to hold the mastery, and then a nobler expression, and one that better became the character of a brave, got possession of his features, and maintained itself until, first throwing aside his light robe of pictured deer-skin, and pointing to the scar of a bayonet in his breast, he replied—

“It was given, as it was taken, face to face.”

“It is enough. My brother is a brave chief, and he should be wise. Let him look: is that a warrior of the Pale-faces? Was it one such as that who gave the great Dahcotah his hurt?”

The eyes of Mahtoree followed the direction of the old man's extended arm, until they rested on the drooping form of Inez. The look of the Teton was long, riveted, and admiring. Like that of the young Pawnee, it resembled more the gaze of a mortal on some heavenly image, than the admiration with which man is wont to contemplate even the loveliness of woman. Starting, as if suddenly self-convicted of forgetfulness, the chief next turned his eyes on Ellen, where they lingered an instant with a much more intelligible expression of admiration, and then pursued their course until they had taken another glance at each individual of the party.

“My brother sees that my tongue is not forked,” continued the trapper, watching the emotions the other betrayed, with a readiness of comprehension little inferior to that of the Teton himself. “The Big-knives do not send their women to war. I know that the Dahcotahs will smoke with the strangers.”

“Mahtoree is a great chief! The Big-knives are welcome,” said the Teton, laying his hand on his breast, with an air of lofty politeness that would have done credit to any state of society. “The arrows of my young men are in their quivers.”

The trapper motioned to Middleton to approach, and in a few moments the two parties were blended in one, each of the males having exchanged friendly greetings, after the fashions of the prairie warriors. But, even while engaged in this hospitable manner, the Dahcotah did not fail to keep a strict watch on the more distant party of white men, as if he still distrusted an artifice, or sought further explanation. The old man, in his turn, perceived the necessity of being more explicit, and of securing the slight and equivocal advantage he had already obtained. While affecting to examine the group, which still lingered at the spot where it had first halted, as if to discover the characters of those who composed it, he plainly saw that Ishmael contemplated immediate hostilities. The result of a conflict on the open prairie, between a dozen resolute border men, and the half-armed natives, even though seconded by their white allies, was in his experienced judgment a point of great uncertainty, and though far from reluctant to engage in the struggle on account of himself, the aged trapper thought it far more worthy of his years, and his character, to avoid than to court the contest. His feelings were, for obvious reasons, in accordance with those of Paul and Middleton, who had lives still more precious than their own to watch over and protect. In this dilemma the three consulted on the means of escaping the frightful consequences which might immediately follow a single act of hostility on the part of the borderers; the old man taking care that their communication should, in the eyes of those who noted the expression of their countenances with jealous watchfulness, bear the appearance of explanations as to the reason why such a party of travellers was met so far in the deserts.

“I know that the Dahcotahs are a wise and great people,” at length the trapper commenced, again addressing himself to the chief; “but does not their partisan know a single brother who is base?”

The eye of Mahtoree wandered proudly around his band, but rested a moment reluctantly on Weucha, as he answered—

“The Master of Life has made chiefs, and warriors, and women;” conceiving that he thus embraced all the gradations of human excellence from the highest to the lowest.

“And he has also made Pale-faces, who are wicked. Such are they whom my brother sees yonder.”

“Do they go on foot to do wrong?” demanded the Teton, with a wild gleam from his eyes, that sufficiently betrayed how well he knew the reason why they were reduced to so humble an expedient.

“Their beasts are gone. But their powder, and their lead, and their blankets remain.”

“Do they carry their riches in their hands, like miserable Konzas? or are they brave, and leave them with the women, as men should do, who know where to find what they lose?”

“My brother sees the spot of blue across the prairie; look, the sun has touched it for the last time to-day.”

“Mahtoree is not a mole.”

“It is a rock; on it are the goods of the Big-knives.”

An expression of savage joy shot into the dark countenance of the Teton as he listened; turning to the old man he seemed to read his soul, as if to assure himself he was not deceived. Then he bent his look on the party of Ishmael, and counted its number.

"One warrior is wanting," he said.

"Does my brother see the buzzards? there is his grave. Did he find blood on the prairie? It was his."

"Enough! Mahtoree is a wise chief. Put your women on the horses of the Dahcotahs: we shall see, for our eyes are open very wide."

The trapper wasted no unnecessary words in explanation. Familiar with the brevity and promptitude of the natives, he immediately communicated the result to his companions. Paul was mounted in an instant, with Ellen at his back. A few more moments were necessary to assure Middleton of the security and ease of Inez. While he was thus engaged, Mahtoree advanced to the side of the beast he had allotted to this service, which was his own, and manifested an intention to occupy his customary place on its back. The young soldier seized the reins of the animal, and glances of sudden anger and lofty pride were exchanged between them.

"No man takes this seat but myself," said Middleton, sternly, in English.

"Mahtoree is a great chief!" retorted the savage; neither comprehending the meaning of the other's words.

"The Dahcotah will be too late," whispered the old man at his elbow; "see; the Big-knives are afraid, and they will soon run."

The Teton chief instantly abandoned his claim, and threw himself on another horse, directing one of his young men to furnish a similar accommodation for the trapper. The warriors who were dismounted, got up behind as many of their companions. Doctor Battius bestrode Asinus; and, notwithstanding the brief interruption, in half the time we have taken to relate it, the whole party was prepared to move.

When he saw that all were ready, Mahtoree gave the signal to advance. A few of the best mounted of the warriors, the chief himself included, moved a little in front, and made a threatening demonstration, as if they intended to attack the strangers. The squatter, who was in truth slowly retiring, instantly halted his party, and showed a willing front. Instead, however, of coming within reach of the dangerous aim of the western rifle, the subtle savages kept wheeling about the strangers, until they had made a half circuit, keeping the latter in constant expectation of an assault. Then, perfectly secure of their object, the Tetons raised a loud shout, and darted across the prairie in a line for the distant rock, with the directness and nearly with the velocity of the arrow, that has just been shot from its bow.

## CHAPTER XXI

Daily not with the gods, but get thee gone.  
—Shakspeare.

Mahtoree had scarcely given the first intimation of his real design, before a general discharge from the borderers proved how well they understood it. The distance, and the rapidity of the flight, however, rendered the fire harmless. As a proof how little he regarded the hostility of their party, the Dahcoteah chieftain answered the report with a yell; and, flourishing his carabine above his head, he made a circuit on the plain, followed by his chosen warriors, in scorn of the impotent attempt of his enemies. As the main body continued the direct course, this little band of the elite, in returning from its wild exhibition of savage contempt, took its place in the rear, with a dexterity and a concert of action that showed the manoeuvre had been contemplated.

Volley swiftly succeeded volley, until the enraged squatter was reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea of injuring his enemies by means so feeble. Relinquishing his fruitless attempt, he commenced a rapid pursuit, occasionally discharging a rifle in order to give the alarm to the garrison, which he had prudently left under the command of the redoubtable Esther herself. In this manner the chase was continued for many minutes, the horsemen gradually gaining on their pursuers, who maintained the race, however, with an incredible power of foot.

As the little speck of blue rose against the heavens, like an island issuing from the deep, the savages occasionally raised a yell of triumph. But the mists of evening were already gathering along the whole of the eastern margin of the prairie, and before the band had made half of the necessary distance, the dim outline of the rock had melted into the haze of the back ground. Indifferent to this circumstance, which rather favoured than disconcerted his plans, Mahtoree, who had again ridden in front, held on his course with the accuracy of a hound of the truest scent, merely slackening his speed a little, as the horses of his party were by this time thoroughly blown. It was at this stage of the enterprise, that the old man rode up to the side of Middleton, and addressed him as follows in English

—  
“Here is likely to be a thieving business, and one in which I must say I have but little wish to be a partner.”

“What would you do? It would be fatal to trust ourselves in the hands of the miscreants in our rear.”

“Tut, for miscreants, be they red or be they white. Look ahead, lad, as if ye were talking of our medicines, or perhaps praising the Teton beasts. For the knaves love to hear their horses commended, the same as a foolish mother in the settlements is fond of hearing the praises of her wilful child. So; pat the animal and lay your hand on the gewgaws, with which the Red-skins have ornamented his mane, giving your eye as it were to one thing, and your mind to another. Listen; if matters are managed with judgment, we may leave these Tetons as the night sets in.”

“A blessed thought!” exclaimed Middleton, who retained a painful remembrance of the look of admiration, with which Mahtoree had contemplated the loveliness of Inez, as well as of his subsequent presumption in daring to wish to take the office of her protector on himself.

“Lord, Lord! what a weak creatur' is man, when the gifts of natur' are smothered in bookish knowledge, and womanly manners! Such another start would tell these imps at our elbows that we were plotting against them, just as plainly as if it were whispered in their ears by a Sioux tongue. Ay, ay, I know the devils; they look as innocent as so many frisky fawns, but there is not one among them all that has not an eye on our smallest motions. Therefore, what is to be done is to be done in wisdom, in order to circumvent their cunning. That is right; pat his neck and smile, as if you praised the horse, and keep the ear on my side open to my words. Be careful not to worry your beast, for though but little skilled in horses, reason teaches that breath is needful in a hard push, and that a weary leg makes a dull race. Be ready to mind the signal, when you hear a whine from old Hector. The first will be to make ready; the second, to edge out of the crowd; and the third, to go—am I understood?”

“Perfectly, perfectly,” said Middleton, trembling in his excessive eagerness to put the plan in instant execution, and pressing the little arm, which encircled his body, to his heart. “Perfectly. Hasten, hasten.”

“Ay, the beast is no sloth,” continued the trapper in the Teton language, as if he continued the discourse, edging cautiously through the dusky throng at the same time, until he found himself riding at the side of Paul. He communicated his intentions in the same guarded manner as before. The high-spirited and fearless bee-hunter received the intelligence with delight, declaring his readiness to engage the whole of the savage band, should it become necessary to effect their object. When the old man drew off from the side of this pair also, he cast his eyes about him to discover the situation occupied by the naturalist.

The Doctor, with infinite labour to himself and Asinus, had maintained a position in the very centre of the Siouxes, so long as there existed the smallest reason for believing that any of the missiles of Ishmael might arrive in contact with his person. After this danger had diminished, or rather disappeared entirely, his own courage revived, while that of his steed began to droop. To this mutual but very material change was owing the fact, that the rider and the ass were now to be sought among that portion of the band who formed a sort of rear-guard. Hither, then, the trapper contrived to turn his steed, without exciting the suspicions of any of his subtle companions.

“Friend,” commenced the old man, when he found himself in a situation favourable to discourse, “should you like to pass a dozen years among the savages with a shaved head, and a painted countenance, with, perhaps, a couple of wives and five or six children of the half breed, to call you father?”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the startled naturalist. “I am indisposed to matrimony in general, and more especially to all admixture of the varieties of species, which only tend to tarnish the beauty and to interrupt the harmony of nature. Moreover, it is a painful innovation on the order of all nomenclatures.”

"Ay, ay, you have reason enough for your distaste to such a life; but should these Siouxes get you fairly into their village, such would be your luck, as certain as that the sun rises and sets at the pleasure of the Lord."

"Marry me to a woman who is not adorned with the comeliness of the species!" responded the Doctor. "Of what crime have I been guilty, that so grievous a punishment should await the offence? To marry a man against the movements of his will, is to do a violence to human nature!"

"Now, that you speak of natur', I have hopes that the gift of reason has not altogether deserted your brain," returned the old man, with a covert expression playing about the angles of his deep set eyes, which betrayed he was not entirely destitute of humour. "Nay, they may conceive you a remarkable subject for their kindness, and for that matter marry you to five or six. I have known, in my days, favoured chiefs who had numberless wives."

"But why should they meditate this vengeance?" demanded the Doctor, whose hair began to rise, as if each fibre was possessed of sensibility; "what evil have I done?"

"It is the fashion of their kindness. When they come to learn that you are a great medicine, they will adopt you in the tribe, and some mighty chief will give you his name, and perhaps his daughter, or it may be a wife or two of his own, who have dwelt long in his lodge, and of whose value he is a judge by experience."

"The Governor and Founder of natural harmony protect me!" ejaculated the Doctor. "I have no affinity to a single consort, much less to duplicates and triplicates of the class! I shall certainly essay a flight from their abodes before I mingle in so violent a conjunction."

"There is reason in your words; but why not attempt the race you speak of now?"

The naturalist looked fearfully around, as if he had an inclination to make an instant exhibition of his desperate intention; but the dusky figures, who were riding on every side of him, seemed suddenly tripled in number, and the darkness, that was already thickening on the prairie, appeared in his eyes to possess the glare of high noon.

"It would be premature, and reason forbids it," he answered. "Leave me, venerable venator, to the council of my own thoughts, and when my plans are properly classed, I will advise you of my resolutions."

"Resolutions!" repeated the old man, shaking his head a little contemptuously as he gave the rein to his horse, and allowed him to mingle with the steeds of the savages. "Resolution is a word that is talked of in the settlements, and felt on the borders. Does my brother know the beast on which the Pale-face rides?" he continued, addressing a gloomy looking warrior in his own tongue, and making a motion with his arm that at the same time directed his attention to the naturalist and the meek Asinus.

The Teton turned his eyes for a minute on the animal, but disdained to manifest the smallest portion of that wonder he had felt, in common with all his companions, on first viewing so rare a quadruped. The trapper was not ignorant, that while asses and mules were beginning to be known to those tribes who dwelt nearest the Mexicos, they were not usually encountered so far north as the waters of La Platte. He therefore managed to read the mute astonishment, that lay so deeply concealed in the tawny visage of the savage, and took his measures accordingly.

"Does my brother think that the rider is a warrior of the Pale-faces?" he demanded, when he believed that sufficient time had elapsed, for a full examination of the pacific mien of the naturalist.

The flash of scorn, which shot across the features of the Teton, was visible, even by the dim light of the stars.

"Is a Dahcotah a fool?" was the answer.

"They are a wise nation, whose eyes are never shut; much do I wonder, that they have not seen the great medicine of the Big-knives!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed his companion, suffering the whole of his amazement to burst out of his dark rigid countenance at the surprise, like a flash of lightning illuminating the gloom of midnight.

"The Dahcotah knows that my tongue is not forked. Let him open his eyes wider. Does he not see a very great medicine?"

The light was not necessary to recall to the savage each feature in the really remarkable costume and equipage of Dr. Battius. In common with the rest of the band, and in conformity with the universal practice of the Indians, this warrior, while he had suffered no gaze of idle curiosity to disgrace his manhood, had not permitted a single distinctive mark, which might characterise any one of the strangers, to escape his vigilance. He knew the air, the stature, the dress, and the features, even to the colour of the eyes and of the hair, of every one of the Big-knives, whom he had thus strangely encountered, and deeply had he ruminated on the causes, which could have led a party, so singularly constituted, into the haunts of the rude inhabitants of his native wastes. He had already considered the several physical powers of the whole party, and had duly compared their abilities with what he supposed might have been their intentions. Warriors they were not, for the Big-knives, like the Siouxes, left their women in their villages when they went out on the bloody path. The same objections applied to them as hunters, and even as traders, the two characters under which the white men commonly appeared in their villages. He had heard of a great council, at which the Menahashah, or Long-knives, and the Washsheomantiqua, or Spaniards, had smoked together, when the latter had sold to the former their incomprehensible rights over those vast regions, through which his nation had roamed, in freedom, for so many ages. His simple mind had not been able to embrace the reasons why one people should thus assume a superiority over the possessions of another, and it will readily be perceived, that at the hint just received from the trapper, he was not indisposed to fancy that some of the hidden subtilty of that magical influence, of which he was so firm a believer, was about to be practised by the unsuspecting subject of their conversation, in furtherance of these mysterious claims. Abandoning, therefore, all the reserve and dignity of his manner, under the conscious helplessness of ignorance, he turned to the old man, and stretching forth his arms, as if to denote how much he lay at his mercy, he said—

"Let my father look at me. I am a wild man of the prairies; my body is naked; my hands empty; my skin red. I have struck the Pawnees, the Konzas, the Omahaws, the Osages, and even the Long-knives. I am a man amid warriors, but a woman among the conjurors. Let my father speak: the ears of the Teton are open. He listens like a deer to the step of the cougar."



"Such are the wise and uns'archable ways of One who alone knows good from evil!" exclaimed the trapper, in English. "To some He grants cunning, and on others He bestows the gift of manhood! It is humbling, and it is afflicting to see so noble a creatur' as this, who has fou't in many a bloody fray, truckling before his superstition like a beggar asking for the bones you would throw to the dogs. The Lord will forgive me for playing with the ignorance of the savage, for He knows I do it in no mockery of his state, or in idle vaunting of my own; but in order to save mortal life, and to give justice to the wronged, while I defeat the deviltries of the wicked! Teton," speaking again in the language of the listener, "I ask you, is not that a wonderful medicine? If the Dahcotahs are wise, they will not breathe the air he breathes, nor touch his robes. They know, that the Wahconshechah (bad spirit) loves his own children, and will not turn his back on him that does them harm."

The old man delivered this opinion in an ominous and sententious manner, and then rode apart as if he had said enough. The result justified his expectations. The warrior, to whom he had addressed himself, was not slow to communicate his important knowledge to the rest of the rear-guard, and, in a very few moments, the naturalist was the object of general observation and reverence. The trapper, who understood that the natives often worshipped, with a view to propitiate, the evil spirit, awaited the workings of his artifice, with the coolness of one who had not the smallest interest in its effects. It was not long before he saw one dark figure after another, lashing his horse and galloping ahead into the centre of the band, until Weucha alone remained nigh the persons of himself and Obed. The very dulness of this grovelling-minded savage, who continued gazing at the supposed conjuror with a sort of stupid admiration, opposed now the only obstacle to the complete success of his artifice.

Thoroughly understanding the character of this Indian, the old man lost no time in getting rid of him also. Riding to his side he said, in an affected whisper—

"Has Weucha drunk of the milk of the Big-knives, to-day?"

"Hugh!" exclaimed the savage, every dull thought instantly recalled from heaven to earth by the question.

"Because the great captain of my people, who rides in front, has a cow that is never empty. I know it will not be long before he will say, Are any of my red brethren dry?"

The words were scarcely uttered, before Weucha, in his turn, quickened the gait of his beast, and was soon blended with the rest of the dark group, who were riding, at a more moderate pace, a few rods in advance. The trapper, who knew how fickle and sudden were the changes of a savage mind, did not lose a moment in profiting by this advantage. He loosened the reins of his own impatient steed, and in an instant he was again at the side of Obed.

"Do you see the twinkling star, that is, may be, the length of four rifles above the prairie; hereaway, to the North I mean?"

"Ay, it is of the constellation—"

"A tut for your constellations, man; do you see the star I mean? Tell me, in the English of the land, yes or no."

"Yes."

"The moment my back is turned, pull upon the rein of your ass, until you lose sight of the savages. Then take the Lord for your dependence, and yonder star for your guide. Turn neither to the right hand, nor to the left, but make diligent use of your time, for your beast is not quick of foot, and every inch of prairie you gain, is a day added to your liberty, or to your life."

Without waiting to listen to the queries, which the naturalist was about to put, the old man again loosened the reins of his horse, and presently he too was blended with the group in front.

Obed was now alone. Asinus willingly obeyed the hint which his master soon gave, rather in desperation than with any very collected understanding of the orders he had received, and checked his pace accordingly. As the Tetons however rode at a hand-gallop, but a moment of time was necessary, after the ass began to walk, to remove them effectually from before the vision of his rider. Without plan, expectation, or hope of any sort, except that of escaping from his dangerous neighbours, the Doctor first feeling, to assure himself that the package, which contained the miserable remnants of his specimens and notes was safe at his crupper, turned the head of the beast in the required direction, and kicking him with a species of fury, he soon succeeded in exciting the speed of the patient animal into a smart run. He had barely time to descend into a hollow and ascend the adjoining swell of the prairie, before he heard, or fancied he heard, his name shouted, in good English, from the throats of twenty Tetons. The delusion gave a new impulse to his ardour; and no professor of the saltant art ever applied himself with greater industry, than the naturalist now used his heels on the ribs of Asinus. The conflict endured for several minutes without interruption, and to all appearances it might have continued to the present moment, had not the meek temper of the beast become unduly excited. Borrowing an idea from the manner in which his master exhibited his agitation, Asinus so far changed the application of his own heels, as to raise them simultaneously with a certain indignant flourish into the air, a measure that instantly decided the controversy in his favour. Obed took leave of his seat, as of a position no longer tenable, continuing, however, the direction of his flight, while the ass, like a conqueror, took possession of the field of battle, beginning to crop the dry herbage, as the fruits of victory.

When Doctor Battius had recovered his feet, and rallied his faculties, which were in a good deal of disorder from the hurried manner in which he had abandoned his former situation, he returned in quest of his specimens and of his ass. Asinus displayed enough of magnanimity to render the interview amicable, and thenceforth the naturalist continued the required route with very commendable industry, but with a much more tempered discretion.

In the mean time, the old trapper had not lost sight of the important movements that he had undertaken to control. Obed had not been mistaken in supposing that he was already missed and sought, though his imagination had corrupted certain savage cries into the well-known sounds that composed his own latinized name. The truth was simply this. The warriors of the rearguard had not failed to apprise those in front of the mysterious character, with which it had pleased the trapper to invest the unsuspecting naturalist. The same untutored admiration, which on the receipt of this intelligence had driven those in the rear to the front, now drove many of the front to the rear. The Doctor was of course absent, and the outcry was no more than the wild yells, which were raised in the first burst of savage disappointment.

But the authority of Mahtoree was prompt to aid the ingenuity of the trapper, in suppressing these dangerous sounds. When order was restored, and the former was made acquainted with the reason why his young men had betrayed so strong a mark of indiscretion, the old man, who had taken a post at his elbow, saw, with alarm, the gleam of keen distrust that flashed in his swarthy visage.

"Where is your conjuror?" demanded the chief, turning suddenly to the trapper, as if he meant to make him responsible for the re-appearance of Obed.

"Can I tell my brother the number of the stars? The ways of a great medicine are not like the ways of other men."

"Listen to me, grey-head, and count my words," continued the other, bending on his rude saddle-bow, like some chevalier of a more civilised race, and speaking in the haughty tones of absolute power; "the Dahcotahs have not chosen a woman for their chief; when Mahtoree feels the power of a great medicine, he will tremble; until then he will look with his own eyes, without borrowing sight from a Pale-face. If your conjuror is not with his friends in the morning, my young men shall look for him. Your ears are open. Enough."

The trapper was not sorry to find that so long a respite was granted. He had before found reason to believe, that the Teton partisan was one of those bold spirits, who overstep the limits which use and education fix to the opinions of man, in every state of society, and he now saw plainly that he must adopt some artifice to deceive him, different from that which had succeeded so well with his followers. The sudden appearance of the rock, however, which hove up, a bleak and ragged mass, out of the darkness ahead, put an end for the present to the discourse, Mahtoree giving all his thoughts to the execution of his designs on the rest of the squatter's movables. A murmur ran through the band, as each dark warrior caught a glimpse of the desired haven, after which the nicest ear might have listened in vain, to catch a sound louder than the rustling of feet among the tall grass of the prairie.

But the vigilance of Esther was not easily deceived. She had long listened anxiously to the suspicious sounds, which approached the rock across the naked waste, nor had the sudden outcry been unheard by the unwearied sentinels of the rock. The savages, who had dismounted at some little distance, had not time to draw around the base of the hill in their customary silent and insidious manner, before the voice of the Amazon was raised, demanding—

"Who is beneath? Answer, for your lives! Siouxes or devils, I fear ye not!"

No answer was given to this challenge, every warrior halting where he stood, confident that his dusky form was blended with the shadows of the plain. It was at this moment that the trapper determined to escape. He had been left with the rest of his friends, under the surveillance of those who were assigned to the duty of watching the horses, and as they all continued mounted, the moment appeared favourable to his project. The attention of the guards was drawn to the rock, and a heavy cloud driving above them at that instant, obscured even the feeble light which fell from the stars. Leaning on the neck of his horse, the old man muttered—

"Where is my pup? Where is it—Hector—where is it, dog?"

The hound caught the well-known sounds, and answered by a whine of friendship, which threatened to break out into one of his piercing howls. The trapper was in the act of raising himself from this successful exploit, when he felt the hand of Weucha grasping his throat, as if determined to suppress his voice by the very unequivocal process of strangulation. Profiting by the circumstance, he raised another low sound, as in the natural effort of breathing, which drew a second responsive cry from the faithful hound. Weucha instantly abandoned his hold of the master in order to wreak his vengeance on the dog. But the voice of Esther was again heard, and every other design was abandoned in order to listen.

"Ay, whine and deform your throats as you may, ye imps of darkness," she said, with a cracked but scornful laugh; "I know ye; tarry, and ye shall have light for your misdeeds. Put in the coal, Phoebe; put in the coal; your father and the boys shall see that they are wanted at home, to welcome their guests."

As she spoke, a strong light, like that of a brilliant star, was seen on the very pinnacle of the rock; then followed a forked flame, which curled for a moment amid the windings of an enormous pile of brush, and flashing upward in an united sheet, it wavered to and fro, in the passing air, shedding a bright glare on every object within its influence. A taunting laugh was heard from the height, in which the voices of all ages mingled, as though they triumphed at having so successfully exposed the treacherous intentions of the Tetons.

The trapper looked about him to ascertain in what situations he might find his friends. True to the signals, Middleton and Paul had drawn a little apart, and now stood ready, by every appearance, to commence their flight at the third repetition of the cry. Hector had escaped his savage pursuer, and was again crouching at the heels of his master's horse. But the broad circle of light was gradually increasing in extent and power, and the old man, whose eye and judgment so rarely failed him, patiently awaited a more propitious moment for his enterprise.

"Now, Ishmael, my man, if sight and hand ar' true as ever, now is the time to work upon these Redskins, who claim to own all your property, even to wife and children! Now, my good man, prove both breed and character!"

A distant shout was heard in the direction of the approaching party of the squatter, assuring the female garrison that succour was not far distant. Esther answered to the grateful sounds by a cracked cry of her own, lifting her form, in the first burst of exultation, above the rock in a manner to be visible to all below. Not content with this dangerous exposure of her person, she was in the act of tossing her arms in triumph, when the dark figure of Mahtoree shot into the light and pinioned them to her side. The forms of three other warriors glided across the top of the rock, looking like naked demons flitting among the clouds. The air was filled with the brands of the beacon, and a heavy darkness succeeded, not unlike that of the appalling instant, when the last rays of the sun are excluded by the intervening mass of the moon. A yell of triumph burst from the savages in their turn, and was rather accompanied than followed by a long, loud whine from Hector.

In an instant the old man was between the horses of Middleton and Paul, extending a hand to the bridle of each, in order to check the impatience of their riders.

"Softly, softly," he whispered, "their eyes are as marvellously shut for the minute, as if the Lord had stricken them blind; but their

ears are open. Softly, softly; for fifty rods, at least, we must move no faster than a walk.”

The five minutes of doubt that succeeded appeared like an age to all but the trapper. As their sight was gradually restored, it seemed to each that the momentary gloom, which followed the extinction of the beacon, was to be replaced by as broad a light as that of noon-day. Gradually the old man, however, suffered the animals to quicken their steps, until they had gained the centre of one of the prairie bottoms. Then laughing in his quiet manner he released the reins and said—

“Now, let them give play to their legs; but keep on the old fog to deaden the sounds.”

It is needless to say how cheerfully he was obeyed. In a few more minutes they ascended and crossed a swell of the land, after which the flight was continued at the top of their horses' speed, keeping the indicated star in view, as the labouring bark steers for the light which points the way to a haven and security.

## CHAPTER XXII

The clouds and sunbeams o'er his eye,  
That once their shades and glories threw,  
Have left, in yonder silent sky,  
No vestige where they flew.

—Montgomery.

A stillness, as deep as that which marked the gloomy wastes in their front, was observed by the fugitives to distinguish the spot they had just abandoned. Even the trapper lent his practised faculties, in vain, to detect any of the well-known signs, which might establish the important fact that hostilities had actually commenced between the parties of Mahtoree and Ishmael; but their horses carried them out of the reach of sounds, without the occurrence of the smallest evidence of the sort. The old man, from time to time, muttered his discontent, but manifested the uneasiness he actually entertained in no other manner, unless it might be in exhibiting a growing anxiety to urge the animals to increase their speed. He pointed out in passing, the deserted swale, where the family of the squatter had encamped, the night they were introduced to the reader, and afterwards he maintained an ominous silence; ominous, because his companions had already seen enough of his character, to be convinced that the circumstances must be critical indeed, which possessed the power to disturb the well regulated tranquillity of the old man's mind.

"Have we not done enough," Middleton demanded, in tenderness to the inability of Inez and Ellen to endure so much fatigue, at the end of some hours; "we have ridden hard, and have crossed a wide tract of plain. It is time to seek a place of rest."

"You must seek it then in Heaven, if you find yourselves unequal to a longer march," murmured the old trapper. "Had the Tetons and the squatter come to blows, as any one might see in the natur' of things they were bound to do, there would be time to look about us, and to calculate not only the chances but the comforts of the journey; but as the case actually is, I should consider it certain death, or endless captivity, to trust our eyes with sleep, until our heads are fairly hid in some uncommon cover."

"I know not," returned the youth, who reflected more on the sufferings of the fragile being he supported, than on the experience of his companion; "I know not; we have ridden leagues, and I can see no extraordinary signs of danger:—if you fear for yourself, my good friend, believe me you are wrong, for—"

"Your grand'ther, were he living and here," interrupted the old man, stretching forth a hand, and laying a finger impressively on the arm of Middleton, "would have spared those words. He had some reason to think that, in the prime of my days, when my eye was quicker than the hawk's, and my limbs were as active as the legs of the fallow-deer, I never clung too eagerly and fondly to life: then why should I now feel such a childish affection for a thing that I know to be vain, and the companion of pain and sorrow. Let the Tetons do their worst; they will not find a miserable and worn out trapper the loudest in his complaints, or his prayers."

"Pardon me, my worthy, my inestimable friend," exclaimed the repentant young man, warmly grasping the hand, which the other was in the act of withdrawing; "I knew not what I said—or rather I thought only of those whose tenderness we are most bound to consider."

"Enough. It is natur', and it is right. Therein your grand'ther would have done the very same. Ah's me! what a number of seasons, hot and cold, wet and dry, have rolled over my poor head, since the time we worried it out together, among the Red Hurons of the Lakes, back in those rugged mountains of Old York! and many a noble buck has since that day fallen by my hand; ay, and many a thieving Mingo, too! Tell me, lad, did the general, for general I know he got to be, did he ever tell you of the deer we took, that night the outlyers of the accursed tribe drove us to the caves, on the island, and how we feasted and drunk in security?"

"I have often heard him mention the smallest circumstance of the night you mean; but—"

"And the singer; and his open throat; and his shoutings in the fights!" continued the old man, laughing joyously at the strength of his own recollections.

"All—all—he forgot nothing, even to the most trifling incident. Do you not—"

"What! did he tell you of the imp behind the log and of the miserable devil who went over the fall—or of the wretch in the tree?"

"Of each and all, with every thing that concerned them.[\*] I should think—"

[\*] They who have read the preceding books, in which, the trapper appears as a hunter and a scout, will readily understand the allusions.

"Ay," continued the old man, in a voice, which betrayed how powerfully his own faculties retained the impression of the spectacle, "I have been a dweller in forests, and in the wilderness for three-score and ten years, and if any can pretend to know the world, or to have seen scary sights, it is myself! But never, before nor since, have I seen human man in such a state of mortal despair as that very savage; and yet he scorned to speak, or to cry out, or to own his forlorn condition! It is their gift, and nobly did he maintain it!"

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, who, content with the knowledge that his waist was grasped by one of the arms of Ellen, had hitherto ridden in unusual silence; "my eyes are as true and as delicate as a humming-bird's in the day; but they are nothing worth boasting of by starlight. Is that a sick buffalo, crawling along in the bottom, there, or is it one of the stray cattle of the savages?"

The whole party drew up, in order to examine the object, which Paul had pointed out. During most of the time, they had ridden in the little vales in order to seek the protection of the shadows, but just at that moment, they had ascended a roll of the prairie in order to cross into the very bottom where this unknown animal was now seen.

"Let us descend," said Middleton; "be it beast or man, we are too strong to have any cause of fear."

"Now, if the thing was not morally impossible," cried the trapper, who the reader must have already discovered was not always exact

in the use of qualifying words, "if the thing was not morally impossible, I should say, that was the man, who journeys in search of reptiles and insects: our fellow-traveller the Doctor."

"Why impossible? did you not direct him to pursue this course, in order to rejoin us?"

"Ay, but I did not tell him to make an ass outdo the speed of a horse—you are right—you are right," said the trapper, interrupting himself, as by gradually lessening the distance between them, his eyes assured him it was Obed and Asinus, whom he saw; "you are right, as certainly as the thing is a miracle. Lord, what a thing is fear! How now, friend; you have been industrious to have got so far ahead in so short a time. I marvel at the speed of the ass!"

"Asinus is overcome," returned the naturalist, mournfully. "The animal has certainly not been idle since we separated, but he declines all my admonitions and invitations to proceed. I hope there is no instant fear from the savages?"

"I cannot say that; I cannot say that; matters are not as they should be, atween the squatter and the Tetons, nor will I answer as yet for the safety of any scalp among us. The beast is broken down! you have urged him beyond his natural gifts, and he is like a worried hound. There is pity and discretion in all things, even though a man be riding for his life."

"You indicated the star," returned the Doctor, "and I deemed it expedient to use great diligence in pursuing the direction."

"Did you expect to reach it, by such haste? Go, go; you talk boldly of the creature's of the Lord, though I plainly see you are but a child in matters that concern their gifts and instincts. What a plight would you now be in, if there was need for a long and a quick push with our heels?"

"The fault exists in the formation of the quadruped," said Obed, whose placid temper began to revolt under so many scandalous imputations. "Had there been rotary levers for two of the members, a moiety of the fatigue would have been saved, for one item—"

"That, for your moiety's and rotaries, and items, man; a jaded ass is a jaded ass, and he who denies it is but a brother of the beast itself. Now, captain, are we driven to choose one of two evils. We must either abandon this man, who has been too much with us through good and bad to be easily cast away, or we must seek a cover to let the animal rest."

"Venerable venator!" exclaimed the alarmed Obed; "I conjure you by all the secret sympathies of our common nature, by all the hidden—"

"Ah, fear has brought him to talk a little rational sense! It is not natur', truly, to abandon a brother in distress; and the Lord He knows that I have never yet done the shameful deed. You are right, friend, you are right; we must all be hidden, and that speedily. But what to do with the ass! Friend Doctor, do you truly value the life of the creature?"

"He is an ancient and faithful servant," returned the disconsolate Obed, "and with pain should I see him come to any harm. Fetter his lower limbs, and leave him to repose in this bed of herbage. I will engage he shall be found where he is left, in the morning."

"And the Siouzes? What would become of the beast should any of the red imps catch a peep at his ears, growing up out of the grass like to mullein-tops?" cried the bee-hunter. "They would stick him as full of arrows, as a woman's cushion is full of pins, and then believe they had done the job for the father of all rabbits! My word for it out they would find out their blunder at the first mouthful!"

Middleton, who began to grow impatient under the protracted discussion, interposed, and, as a good deal of deference was paid to his rank, he quickly prevailed in his efforts to effect a sort of compromise. The humble Asinus, too meek and too weary to make any resistance, was soon tethered and deposited in his bed of dying grass, where he was left with a perfect confidence on the part of his master of finding him, again, at the expiration of a few hours. The old man strongly remonstrated against this arrangement, and more than once hinted that the knife was much more certain than the tether, but the petitions of Obed, aided perhaps by the secret reluctance of the trapper to destroy the beast, were the means of saving its life. When Asinus was thus secured, and as his master believed secreted, the whole party proceeded to find some place where they might rest themselves, during the time required for the repose of the animal.

According to the calculations of the trapper, they had ridden twenty miles since the commencement of their flight. The delicate frame of Inez began to droop under the excessive fatigue, nor was the more robust, but still feminine person of Ellen, insensible to the extraordinary effort she had made. Middleton himself was not sorry to repose, nor did the vigorous and high-spirited Paul hesitate to confess that he should be all the better for a little rest. The old man alone seemed indifferent to the usual claims of nature. Although but little accustomed to the unusual description of exercise he had just been taking, he appeared to bid defiance to all the usual attacks of human infirmities. Though evidently so near its dissolution, his attenuated frame still stood like the shaft of seasoned oak, dry, naked, and tempest-driven, but unbending and apparently indurated to the consistency of stone. On the present occasion he conducted the search for a resting-place, which was immediately commenced, with all the energy of youth, tempered by the discretion and experience of his great age.

The bed of grass, in which the Doctor had been met, and in which his ass had just been left, was followed a little distance until it was found that the rolling swells of the prairie were melting away into one vast level plain, that was covered, for miles on miles, with the same species of herbage.

"Ah, this may do, this may do," said the old man, when they arrived on the borders of this sea of withered grass. "I know the spot, and often have I lain in its secret holes, for days at a time, while the savages have been hunting the buffaloes on the open ground. We must enter it with great care, for a broad trail might be seen, and Indian curiosity is a dangerous neighbour."

Leading the way himself, he selected a spot where the tall coarse herbage stood most erect, growing not unlike a bed of reeds, both in height and density. Here he entered, singly, directing the others to follow as nearly as possible in his own footsteps. When they had paused for some hundred or two feet into the wilderness of weeds, he gave his directions to Paul and Middleton, who continued a direct route deeper into the place, while he dismounted and returned on his tracks to the margin of the meadow. Here he passed many minutes in replacing the trodden grass, and in effacing, as far as possible, every evidence of their passage.

In the mean time the rest of the party continued their progress, not without toil, and consequently at a very moderate gait, until they

had penetrated a mile into the place. Here they found a spot suited to their circumstances, and, dismounting, they began to make their dispositions to pass the remainder of the night. By this time the trapper had rejoined the party, and again resumed the direction of their proceedings.

The weeds and grass were soon plucked and cut from an area of sufficient extent, and a bed for Inez and Ellen was speedily made, a little apart, which for sweetness and ease might have rivalled one of down. The exhausted females, after receiving some light refreshments from the provident stores of Paul and the old man, now sought their repose, leaving their more stout companions at liberty to provide for their own necessities. Middleton and Paul were not long in following the example of their betrothed, leaving the trapper and the naturalist still seated around a savoury dish of bison's meat, which had been cooked at a previous halt, and which was, as usual, eaten cold.

A certain lingering sensation, which had so long been uppermost in the mind of Obed, temporarily banished sleep; and as for the old man, his wants were rendered, by habit and necessity, as seemingly subject to his will as if they altogether depended on the pleasure of the moment. Like his companion he chose therefore to watch, instead of sleeping.

"If the children of ease and security knew the hardships and dangers the students of nature encounter in their behalf," said Obed, after a moment of silence, when Middleton took his leave for the night, "pillars of silver, and statues of brass would be reared as the everlasting monuments of their glory!"

"I know not, I know not," returned his companion; "silver is far from plenty, at least in the wilderness, and your brazen idols are forbidden in the commandments of the Lord."

"Such indeed was the opinion of the great lawgiver of the Jews, but the Egyptians, and the Chaldeans, the Greeks, and the Romans, were wont to manifest their gratitude, in these types of the human form. Indeed many of the illustrious masters of antiquity, have by the aid of science and skill, even outdone the works of nature, and exhibited a beauty and perfection in the human form that are difficult to be found in the rarest living specimens of any of the species; genus, homo."

"Can your idols walk or speak, or have they the glorious gift of reason?" demanded the trapper, with some indignation in his voice; "though but little given to run into the noise and chatter of the settlements, yet have I been into the towns in my day, to barter the peltry for lead and powder, and often have I seen your waxen dolls, with their tawdry clothes and glass eyes—"

"Waxen dolls!" interrupted Obed; "it is profanation, in the view of the arts, to liken the miserable handy-work of the dealers in wax to the pure models of antiquity!"

"It is profanation in the eyes of the Lord," retorted the old man, "to liken the works of his creator's, to the power of his own hand."

"Venerable venator," resumed the naturalist, clearing his throat, like one who was much in earnest, "let us discuss understandingly and in amity. You speak of the dross of ignorance, whereas my memory dwells on those precious jewels, which it was my happy fortune, formerly, to witness, among the treasured glories of the Old World."

"Old World!" retorted the trapper, "that is the miserable cry of all the half-starved miscreants that have come into this blessed land, since the days of my boyhood! They tell you of the Old World; as if the Lord had not the power and the will to create the universe in a day, or as if he had not bestowed his gifts with an equal hand, though not with an equal mind, or equal wisdom, have they been received and used. Were they to say a worn out, and an abused, and a sacrilegious world, they might not be so far from the truth!"

Doctor Battius, who found it quite as arduous a task to maintain any of his favourite positions with so irregular an antagonist, as he would have found it difficult to keep his feet within the hug of a western wrestler, hemmed aloud, and profited by the new opening the trapper had made, to shift the grounds of the discussion—

"By Old and New World, my excellent associate," he said, "it is not to be understood that the hills, and the valleys, the rocks and the rivers of our own moiety of the earth do not, physically speaking, bear a date as ancient as the spot on which the bricks of Babylon are found; it merely signifies that its moral existence is not co-equal with its physical, or geological formation."

"Anan!" said the old man, looking up enquiringly into the face of the philosopher.

"Merely that it has not been so long known in morals, as the other countries of Christendom."

"So much the better, so much the better. I am no great admirator of your old morals, as you call them, for I have ever found, and I have liv'd long as it were in the very heart of natur', that your old morals are none of the best. Mankind twist and turn the rules of the Lord, to suit their own wickedness, when their devilish cunning has had too much time to trifle with His commands."

"Nay, venerable hunter, still am I not comprehended. By morals I do not mean the limited and literal signification of the term, such as is conveyed in its synonyme, morality, but the practices of men, as connected with their daily intercourse, their institutions, and their laws."

"And such I call barefaced and downright wantonness and waste," interrupted his sturdy disputant.

"Well, be it so," returned the Doctor, abandoning the explanation in despair. "Perhaps I have conceded too much," he then instantly added, fancying that he still saw the glimmerings of an argument through another chink in the discourse. "Perhaps I have conceded too much, in saying that this hemisphere is literally as old in its formation, as that which embraces the venerable quarters of Europe, Asia, and Africa."

"It is easy to say a pine is not so tall as an alder, but it would be hard to prove. Can you give a reason for such a belief?"

"The reasons are numerous and powerful," returned the Doctor, delighted by this encouraging opening. "Look into the plains of Egypt and Arabia; their sandy deserts teem with the monuments of their antiquity; and then we have also recorded documents of their glory; doubling the proofs of their former greatness, now that they lie stripped of their fertility; while we look in vain for similar evidences that man has ever reached the summit of civilisation on this continent, or search, without our reward, for the path by which he has made the downward journey to his present condition of second childhood."

"And what see you in all this?" demanded the trapper, who, though a little confused by the terms of his companion, seized the thread of his ideas.

"A demonstration of my problem, that nature did not make so vast a region to lie an uninhabited waste so many ages. This is merely the moral view of the subject; as to the more exact and geological—"

"Your morals are exact enough for me," returned the old man, "for I think I see in them the very pride of folly. I am but little gifted in the fables of what you call the Old World, seeing that my time has been mainly passed looking nature steadily in the face, and in reasoning on what I've seen, rather than on what I've heard in traditions. But I have never shut my ears to the words of the good book, and many is the long winter evening that I have passed in the wigwams of the Delawares, listening to the good Moravians, as they dealt forth the history and doctrines of the elder times, to the people of the Lenape! It was pleasant to hearken to such wisdom after a weary hunt! Right pleasant did I find it, and often have I talked the matter over with the Great Serpent of the Delawares, in the more peaceful hours of our out-lyings, whether it might be on the trail of a war-party of the Mingoes, or on the watch for a York deer. I remember to have heard it, then and there, said, that the Blessed Land was once fertile as the bottoms of the Mississippi, and groaning with its stores of grain and fruits; but that the judgment has since fallen upon it, and that it is now more remarkable for its barrenness than any qualities to boast of."

"It is true; but Egypt—nay much of Africa furnishes still more striking proofs of this exhaustion of nature."

"Tell me," interrupted the old man, "is it a certain truth that buildings are still standing in that land of Pharaoh, which may be likened, in their stature, to the hills of the 'arth?"

"It is as true as that nature never refuses to bestow her incisores on the animals, mammalia; genus, homo—"

"It is very marvellous! and it proves how great He must be, when His miserable creatur's can accomplish such wonders! Many men must have been needed to finish such an edifice; ay, and men gifted with strength and skill too! Does the land abound with such a race to this hour?"

"Far from it. Most of the country is a desert, and but for a mighty river all would be so."

"Yes; rivers are rare gifts to such as till the ground, as any one may see who journeys far atween the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi. But how do you account for these changes on the face of the 'arth itself, and for this downfall of nations, you men of the schools?"

"It is to be ascribed to moral cau—"

"You're right—it is their morals; their wickedness and their pride, and chiefly their waste that has done it all! Now listen to what the experience of an old man teaches him. I have lived long, as these grey hairs and wrinkled hands will show, even though my tongue should fail in the wisdom of my years. And I have seen much of the folly of man; for his natur' is the same, be he born in the wilderness, or be he born in the towns. To my weak judgment it hath ever seemed that his gifts are not equal to his wishes. That he would mount into the heavens, with all his deformities about him, if he only knew the road, no one will gainsay, that witnesses his bitter strivings upon 'arth. If his power is not equal to his will, it is because the wisdom of the Lord hath set bounds to his evil workings."

"It is much too certain that certain facts will warrant a theory, which teaches the natural depravity of the genus; but if science could be fairly brought to bear on a whole species at once, for instance, education might eradicate the evil principle."

"That, for your education! The time has been when I have thought it possible to make a companion of a beast. Many are the cubs, and many are the speckled fawns that I have reared with these old hands, until I have even fancied them rational and altered beings—but what did it amount to? the bear would bite, and the deer would run, notwithstanding my wicked conceit in fancying I could change a temper that the Lord himself had seen fit to bestow. Now if man is so blinded in his folly as to go on, ages on ages, doing harm chiefly to himself, there is the same reason to think that he has wrought his evil here as in the countries you call so old. Look about you, man; where are the multitudes that once peopled these prairies; the kings and the palaces; the riches and the mightinesses of this desert?"

"Where are the monuments that would prove the truth of so vague a theory?"

"I know not what you call a monument."

"The works of man! The glories of Thebes and Balbec—columns, catacombs, and pyramids! standing amid the sands of the East, like wrecks on a rocky shore, to testify to the storms of ages!"

"They are gone. Time has lasted too long for them. For why? Time was made by the Lord, and they were made by man. This very spot of reeds and grass, on which you now sit, may once have been the garden of some mighty king. It is the fate of all things to ripen, and then to decay. The tree blossoms, and bears its fruit, which falls, rots, withers, and even the seed is lost! Go, count the rings of the oak and of the sycamore; they lie in circles, one about another, until the eye is blinded in striving to make out their numbers; and yet a full change of the seasons comes round while the stem is winding one of these little lines about itself, like the buffalo changing his coat, or the buck his horns; and what does it all amount to? There does the noble tree fill its place in the forest, loftier, and grander, and richer, and more difficult to imitate, than any of your pitiful pillars, for a thousand years, until the time which the Lord hath given it is full. Then come the winds, that you cannot see, to rive its bark; and the waters from the heavens, to soften its pores; and the rot, which all can feel and none can understand, to humble its pride and bring it to the ground. From that moment its beauty begins to perish. It lies another hundred years, a mouldering log, and then a mound of moss and 'arth; a sad effigy of a human grave. This is one of your genuine monuments, though made by a very different power than such as belongs to your chiseling masonry! and after all, the cunningest scout of the whole Dahcotah nation might pass his life in searching for the spot where it fell, and be no wiser when his eyes grew dim, than when they were first opened. As if that was not enough to convince man of his ignorance; and as though it were put there in mockery of his conceit, a pine shoots up from the roots of the oak, just as barrenness comes after fertility, or as these wastes

have been spread, where a garden may have been created. Tell me not of your worlds that are old! it is blasphemous to set bounds and seasons, in this manner, to the works of the Almighty, like a woman counting the ages of her young.”

“Friend hunter, or trapper,” returned the naturalist, clearing his throat in some intellectual confusion at the vigorous attack of his companion, “your deductions, if admitted by the world, would sadly circumscribe the efforts of reason, and much abridge the boundaries of knowledge.”

“So much the better—so much the better; for I have always found that a conceited man never knows content. All things prove it. Why have we not the wings of the pigeon, the eyes of the eagle, and the legs of the moose, if it had been intended that man should be equal to all his wishes?”

“There are certain physical defects, venerable trapper, in which I am always ready to admit great and happy alterations might be suggested. For example, in my own order of Phalangacru—”

“Cruel enough would be the order, that should come from miserable hands like thine! A touch from such a finger would destroy the mocking deformity of a monkey! Go, go; human folly is not needed to fill up the great design of God. There is no stature, no beauty, no proportions, nor any colours in which man himself can well be fashioned, that is not already done to his hands.”

“That is touching another great and much disputed question,” exclaimed the Doctor, who seized upon every distinct idea that the ardent and somewhat dogmatic old man left exposed to his mental grasp, with the vain hope of inducing a logical discussion, in which he might bring his battery of syllogisms to annihilate the unscientific defences of his antagonist.

It is, however, unnecessary to our narrative to relate the erratic discourse that ensued. The old man eluded the annihilating blows of his adversary, as the light armed soldier is wont to escape the efforts of the more regular warrior, even while he annoys him most, and an hour passed away without bringing any of the numerous subjects, on which they touched, to a satisfactory conclusion. The arguments acted, however, on the nervous system of the Doctor, like so many soothing soporifics, and by the time his aged companion was disposed to lay his head on his pack, Obed, refreshed by his recent mental joust, was in a condition to seek his natural rest, without enduring the torments of the incubus, in the shapes of Teton warriors and bloody tomahawks.



## CHAPTER XXIII

—Save you, sir.

—Shakspeare.

The sleep of the fugitives lasted for several hours. The trapper was the first to shake off its influence, as he had been the last to court its refreshment. Rising, just as the grey light of day began to brighten that portion of the studded vault which rested on the eastern margin of the plain, he summoned his companions from their warm lairs, and pointed out the necessity of their being once more on the alert. While Middleton attended to the arrangements necessary to the comforts of Inez and Ellen, in the long and painful journey which lay before them, the old man and Paul prepared the meal, which the former had advised them to take before they proceeded to horse. These several dispositions were not long in making, and the little group was soon seated about a repast which, though it might want the elegancies to which the bride of Middleton had been accustomed, was not deficient in the more important requisites of savour and nutriment.

“When we get lower into the hunting-grounds of the Pawnees,” said the trapper, laying a morsel of delicate venison before Inez, on a little trencher neatly made of horn, and expressly for his own use, “we shall find the buffaloes fatter and sweeter, the deer in more abundance, and all the gifts of the Lord abounding to satisfy our wants. Perhaps we may even strike a beaver, and get a morsel from his tail[\*] by way of a rare mouthful.”

[\*] The American hunters consider the tail of the beaver the most nourishing of all food.

“What course do you mean to pursue, when you have once thrown these bloodhounds from the chase?” demanded Middleton.

“If I might advise,” said Paul, “it would be to strike a water-course, and get upon its downward current, as soon as may be. Give me a cotton-wood, and I will turn you out a canoe that shall carry us all, the jackass excepted, in perhaps the work of a day and a night. Ellen, here, is a lively girl enough, but then she is no great race-rider; and it would be far more comfortable to boat six or eight hundred miles, than to go loping along like so many elks measuring the prairies; besides, water leaves no trail.”

“I will not swear to that,” returned the trapper; “I have often thought the eyes of a Red-skin would find a trail in air.”

“See, Middleton,” exclaimed Inez, in a sudden burst of youthful pleasure, that caused her for a moment to forget her situation, “how lovely is that sky; surely it contains a promise of happier times!”

“It is glorious!” returned her husband. “Glorious and heavenly is that streak of vivid red, and here is a still brighter crimson; rarely have I seen a richer rising of the sun.

“Rising of the sun!” slowly repeated the old man, lifting his tall person from its seat with a deliberate and abstracted air, while he kept his eye riveted on the changing, and certainly beautiful tints, that were garnishing the vault of Heaven. “Rising of the sun! I like not such risings of the sun. Ah’s me! the imps have circumvented us with a vengeance. The prairie is on fire!”

“God in Heaven protect us!” cried Middleton, catching Inez to his bosom, under the instant impression of the imminence of their danger. “There is no time to lose, old man; each instant is a day; let us fly.”

“Whither?” demanded the trapper, motioning him, with calmness and dignity, to arrest his steps. “In this wilderness of grass and reeds, you are like a vessel in the broad lakes without a compass. A single step on the wrong course might prove the destruction of us all. It is seldom danger is so pressing, that there is not time enough for reason to do its work, young officer; therefore let us await its biddings.”

“For my own part,” said Paul Hover, looking about him with no equivocal expression of concern, “I acknowledge, that should this dry bed of weeds get fairly in a flame, a bee would have to make a flight higher than common to prevent his wings from scorching. Therefore, old trapper, I agree with the captain, and say mount and run.”

“Ye are wrong—ye are wrong; man is not a beast to follow the gift of instinct, and to snuff up his knowledge by a taint in the air, or a rumbling in the sound; but he must see and reason, and then conclude. So follow me a little to the left, where there is a rise in the ground, whence we may make our reconnoitings.”

The old man waved his hand with authority, and led the way without further par lance to the spot he had indicated, followed by the whole of his alarmed companions. An eye less practised than that of the trapper might have failed in discovering the gentle elevation to which he alluded, and which looked on the surface of the meadow like a growth a little taller than common. When they reached the place, however, the stunted grass itself announced the absence of that moisture, which had fed the rank weeds of most of the plain, and furnished a clue to the evidence by which he had judged of the formation of the ground hidden beneath. Here a few minutes were lost in breaking down the tops of the surrounding herbage, which, notwithstanding the advantage of their position, rose even above the heads of Middleton and Paul, and in obtaining a look-out that might command a view of the surrounding sea of fire.

The frightful prospect added nothing to the hopes of those who had so fearful a stake in the result. Although the day was beginning to dawn, the vivid colours of the sky continued to deepen, as if the fierce element were bent on an impious rivalry of the light of the sun. Bright flashes of flame shot up here and there, along the margin of the waste, like the nimble coruscations of the North, but far more angry and threatening in their colour and changes. The anxiety on the rigid features of the trapper sensibly deepened, as he leisurely traced these evidences of a conflagration, which spread in a broad belt about their place of refuge, until he had encircled the whole horizon.

Shaking his head, as he again turned his face to the point where the danger seemed nighest and most rapidly approaching, the old man said—

"Now have we been cheating ourselves with the belief, that we had thrown these Tetons from our trail, while here is proof enough that they not only know where we lie, but that they intend to smoke us out, like so many skulking beasts of prey. See; they have lighted the fire around the whole bottom at the same moment, and we are as completely hemmed in by the devils as an island by its waters."

"Let us mount and ride," cried Middleton; "is life not worth a struggle?"

"Whither would ye go? Is a Teton horse a salamander that he can walk amid fiery flames unhurt, or do you think the Lord will show his might in your behalf, as in the days of old, and carry you harmless through such a furnace as you may see glowing beneath yonder red sky? There are Siouxs, too, hemming the fire with their arrows and knives on every side of us, or I am no judge of their murderous deviltries."

"We will ride into the centre of the whole tribe," returned the youth fiercely, "and put their manhood to the test."

"Ay, it's well in words, but what would it prove in deeds? Here is a dealer in bees, who can teach you wisdom in a matter like this."

"Now for that matter, old trapper," said Paul, stretching his athletic form like a mastiff conscious of his strength, "I am on the side of the captain, and am clearly for a race against the fire, though it line me into a Teton wigwam. Here is Ellen, who will—"

"Of what use, of what use are your stout hearts, when the element of the Lord is to be conquered as well as human men. Look about you, friends; the wreath of smoke, that is rising from the bottoms, plainly says that there is no outlet from this spot, without crossing a belt of fire. Look for yourselves, my men; look for yourselves; if you can find a single opening, I will engage to follow."

The examination, which his companions so instantly and so intently made, rather served to assure them of their desperate situation, than to appease their fears. Huge columns of smoke were rolling up from the plain, and thickening in gloomy masses around the horizon. The red glow, which gleamed upon their enormous folds, now lighting their volumes with the glare of the conflagration, and now flashing to another point, as the flame beneath glided ahead, leaving all behind enveloped in awful darkness, and proclaiming louder than words the character of the imminent and approaching danger.

"This is terrible!" exclaimed Middleton, folding the trembling Inez to his heart. "At such a time as this, and in such a manner!"

"The gates of Heaven are open to all who truly believe," murmured the pious devotee in his bosom.

"This resignation is maddening! But we are men, and will make a struggle for our lives! how now, my brave and spirited friend, shall we yet mount and push across the flames, or shall we stand here, and see those we most love perish in this frightful manner, without an effort?"

"I am for a swarming time, and a flight before the hive is too hot to hold us," said the bee-hunter, to whom it will be at once seen that Middleton addressed himself. "Come, old trapper, you must acknowledge this is but a slow way of getting out of danger. If we tarry here much longer, it will be in the fashion that the bees lie around the straw after the hive has been smoked for its honey. You may hear the fire begin to roar already, and I know by experience, that when the flame once gets fairly into the prairie grass, it is no sloth that can outrun it."

"Think you," returned the old man, pointing scornfully at the mazes of the dry and matted grass which environed them, "that mortal feet can outstrip the speed of fire, on such a path! If I only knew now on which side these miscreants lay!"

"What say you, friend Doctor," cried the bewildered Paul, turning to the naturalist with that sort of helplessness with which the strong are often apt to seek aid of the weak, when human power is baffled by the hand of a mightier being, "what say you; have you no advice to give away, in a case of life and death?"

The naturalist stood, tablets in hand, looking at the awful spectacle with as much composure as if the conflagration had been lighted in order to solve the difficulties of some scientific problem. Aroused by the question of his companion, he turned to his equally calm though differently occupied associate, the trapper, demanding, with the most provoking insensibility to the urgent nature of their situation—

"Venerable hunter, you have often witnessed similar prismatic experiments—"

He was rudely interrupted by Paul, who struck the tablets from his hands, with a violence that betrayed the utter intellectual confusion which had upset the equanimity of his mind. Before time was allowed for remonstrance, the old man, who had continued during the whole scene like one much at a loss how to proceed, though also like one who was rather perplexed than alarmed, suddenly assumed a decided air, as if he no longer doubted on the course it was most advisable to pursue.

"It is time to be doing," he said, interrupting the controversy that was about to ensue between the naturalist and the bee-hunter; "it is time to leave off books and moanings, and to be doing."

"You have come to your recollections too late, miserable old man," cried Middleton; "the flames are within a quarter of a mile of us, and the wind is bringing them down in this quarter with dreadful rapidity."

"Anan! the flames! I care but little for the flames. If I only knew how to circumvent the cunning of the Tetons, as I know how to cheat the fire of its prey, there would be nothing needed but thanks to the Lord for our deliverance. Do you call this a fire? If you had seen what I have witnessed in the Eastern hills, when mighty mountains were like the furnace of smith, you would have known what it was to fear the flames, and to be thankful that you were spared! Come, lads, come; 'tis time to be doing now, and to cease talking; for yonder curling flame is truly coming on like a trotting moose. Put hands upon this short and withered grass where we stand, and lay bare the 'arth."

"Would you think to deprive the fire of its victims in this childish manner?" exclaimed Middleton.

A faint but solemn smile passed over the features of the old man, as he answered—

"Your grand'ther would have said, that when the enemy was nigh, a soldier could do no better than to obey."

The captain felt the reproof, and instantly began to imitate the industry of Paul, who was tearing the decayed herbage from the ground in a sort of desperate compliance with the trapper's direction. Even Ellen lent her hands to the labour, nor was it long before

Inez was seen similarly employed, though none amongst them knew why or wherefore. When life is thought to be the reward of labour, men are wont to be industrious. A very few moments sufficed to lay bare a spot of some twenty feet in diameter. Into one edge of this little area the trapper brought the females, directing Middleton and Paul to cover their light and inflammable dresses with the blankets of the party. So soon as this precaution was observed, the old man approached the opposite margin of the grass, which still environed them in a tall and dangerous circle, and selecting a handful of the driest of the herbage he placed it over the pan of his rifle. The light combustible kindled at the flash. Then he placed the little flame in a bed of the standing fog, and withdrawing from the spot to the centre of the ring, he patiently awaited the result.

The subtle element seized with avidity upon its new fuel, and in a moment forked flames were gliding among the grass, as the tongues of ruminating animals are seen rolling among their food, apparently in quest of its sweetest portions.

"Now," said the old man, holding up a finger, and laughing in his peculiarly silent manner, "you shall see fire fight fire! Ah's me! many is the time I have burnt a smooty path, from wanton laziness to pick my way across a tangled bottom."

"But is this not fatal?" cried the amazed Middleton; "are you not bringing the enemy nigher to us instead of avoiding it?"

"Do you scorch so easily? your grand'ther had a tougher skin. But we shall live to see; we shall all live to see."

The experience of the trapper was in the right. As the fire gained strength and heat, it began to spread on three sides, dying of itself on the fourth, for want of aliment. As it increased, and the sullen roaring announced its power, it cleared every thing before it, leaving the black and smoking soil far more naked than if the scythe had swept the place. The situation of the fugitives would have still been hazardous had not the area enlarged as the flame encircled them. But by advancing to the spot where the trapper had kindled the grass, they avoided the heat, and in a very few moments the flames began to recede in every quarter, leaving them enveloped in a cloud of smoke, but perfectly safe from the torrent of fire that was still furiously rolling onward.

The spectators regarded the simple expedient of the trapper with that species of wonder, with which the courtiers of Ferdinand are said to have viewed the manner in which Columbus made his egg stand on its end, though with feelings that were filled with gratitude instead of envy.

"Most wonderful!" said Middleton, when he saw the complete success of the means by which they had been rescued from a danger that he had conceived to be unavoidable. "The thought was a gift from Heaven, and the hand that executed it should be immortal!"

"Old trapper," cried Paul, thrusting his fingers through his shaggy locks, "I have lined many a loaded bee into his hole, and know something of the nature of the woods, but this is robbing a hornet of his sting without touching the insect!"

"It will do—it will do," returned the old man, who after the first moment of his success seemed to think no more of the exploit; "now get the horses in readiness. Let the flames do their work for a short half hour, and then we will mount. That time is needed to cool the meadow, for these unshod Teton beasts are as tender on the hoof as a barefooted girl."

Middleton and Paul, who considered this unlooked-for escape as a species of resurrection, patiently awaited the time the trapper mentioned with renewed confidence in the infallibility of his judgment. The Doctor regained his tablets, a little the worse from having fallen among the grass which had been subject to the action of the flames, and was consoling himself for this slight misfortune by recording uninterruptedly such different vacillations in light and shadow as he chose to consider phenomena.

In the mean time the veteran, on whose experience they all so implicitly relied for protection, employed himself in reconnoitring objects in the distance, through the openings which the air occasionally made in the immense bodies of smoke, that by this time lay in enormous piles on every part of the plain.

"Look you here, lads," the trapper said, after a long and anxious examination, "your eyes are young and may prove better than my worthless sight—though the time has been, when a wise and brave people saw reason to think me quick on a look-out; but those times are gone, and many a true and tried friend has passed away with them. Ah's me! if I could choose a change in the orderings of Providence—which I cannot, and which it would be blasphemy to attempt, seeing that all things are governed by a wiser mind than belongs to mortal weakness—but if I were to choose a change, it would be to say, that such as they who have lived long together in friendship and kindness, and who have proved their fitness to go in company, by many acts of suffering and daring in each other's behalf, should be permitted to give up life at such times, as when the death of one leaves the other but little reason to wish to live."

"Is it an Indian, that you see?" demanded the impatient Middleton.

"Red-skin or White-skin it is much the same. Friendship and use can tie men as strongly together in the woods as in the towns—ay, and for that matter, stronger. Here are the young warriors of the prairies.—Often do they sort themselves in pairs, and set apart their lives for deeds of friendship; and well and truly do they act up to their promises. The death-blow to one is commonly mortal to the other! I have been a solitary man much of my time, if he can be called solitary, who has lived for seventy years in the very bosom of natur', and where he could at any instant open his heart to God, without having to strip it of the cares and wickednesses of the settlements—but making that allowance, have I been a solitary man; and yet have I always found that intercourse with my kind was pleasant, and painful to break off, provided that the companion was brave and honest. Brave, because a skeary comrade in the woods," suffering his eyes inadvertently to rest a moment on the person of the abstracted naturalist, "is apt to make a short path long; and honest, inasmuch as craftiness is rather an instinct of the brutes, than a gift becoming the reason of a human man."

"But the object, that you saw—was it a Sioux?"

"What the world of America is coming to, and where the machinations and inventions of its people are to have an end, the Lord, he only knows. I have seen, in my day, the chief who, in his time, had beheld the first Christian that placed his wicked foot in the regions of York! How much has the beauty of the wilderness been deformed in two short lives! My own eyes were first opened on the shores of the Eastern sea, and well do I remember, that I tried the virtues of the first rifle I ever bore, after such a march, from the door of my father to the forest, as a stripling could make between sun and sun; and that without offence to the rights, or prejudices, of any man who set himself up to be the owner of the beasts of the fields. Natur' then lay in its glory along the whole coast, giving a narrow stripe,

between the woods and the ocean, to the greediness of the settlers. And where am I now? Had I the wings of an eagle, they would tire before a tenth of the distance, which separates me from that sea, could be passed; and towns, and villages, farms, and highways, churches, and schools, in short, all the inventions and deviltries of man, are spread across the region. I have known the time when a few Red-skins, shouting along the borders, could set the provinces in a fever; and men were to be armed; and troops were to be called to aid from a distant land; and prayers were said, and the women frightened, and few slept in quiet, because the Iroquois were on the war-path, or the accursed Mingo had the tomahawk in hand. How is it now? The country sends out her ships to foreign lands, to wage their battles; cannon are plentier than the rifle used to be, and trained soldiers are never wanting, in tens of thousands, when need calls for their services. Such is the difference atween a province and a state, my men; and I, miserable and worn out as I seem, have lived to see it all!"

"That you must have seen many a chopper skimming the cream from the face of the earth, and many a settler getting the very honey of nature, old trapper," said Paul, "no reasonable man can, or, for that matter, shall doubt. But here is Ellen getting uneasy about the Siouxes, and now you have opened your mind, so freely, concerning these matters, if you will just put us on the line of our flight, the swarm will make another move."

"Anan!"

"I say that Ellen is getting uneasy, and as the smoke is lifting from the plain, it may be prudent to take another flight."

"The boy is reasonable. I had forgotten we were in the midst of a raging fire, and that Siouxes were round about us, like hungry wolves watching a drove of buffaloes. But when memory is at work in my old brain, on times long past, it is apt to overlook the matters of the day. You say right, my children; it is time to be moving, and now comes the real nicety of our case. It is easy to outwit a furnace, for it is nothing but a raging element; and it is not always difficult to throw a grizzly bear from his scent, for the creatur' is both enlightened and blinded by his instinct; but to shut the eyes of a waking Teton is a matter of greater judgment, inasmuch as his devilry is backed by reason."

Notwithstanding the old man appeared so conscious of the difficulty of the undertaking, he set about its achievement with great steadiness and alacrity. After completing the examination, which had been interrupted by the melancholy wanderings of his mind, he gave the signal to his companions to mount. The horses, which had continued passive and trembling amid the raging of the fire, received their burdens with a satisfaction so very evident, as to furnish a favourable augury of their future industry. The trapper invited the Doctor to take his own steed, declaring his intention to proceed on foot.

"I am but little used to journeying with the feet of others," he added, as a reason for the measure, "and my legs are a weary of doing nothing. Besides, should we light suddenly on an ambushment, which is a thing far from impossible, the horse will be in a better condition for a hard run with one man on his back than with two. As for me, what matters it whether my time is to be a day shorter or a day longer! Let the Teton take my scalp, if it be God's pleasure: they will find it covered with grey hairs; and it is beyond the craft of man to cheat me of the knowledge and experience by which they have been whitened."

As no one among the impatient listeners seemed disposed to dispute the arrangement, it was acceded to in silence. The Doctor, though he muttered a few mourning exclamations on behalf of the lost Asinus, was by far too well pleased in finding that his speed was likely to be sustained by four legs instead of two, to be long in complying: and, consequently, in a very few moments the bee-hunter, who was never last to speak on such occasions, vociferously announced that they were ready to proceed.

"Now look off yonder to the East," said the old man, as he began to lead the way across the murky and still smoking plain; "little fear of cold feet in journeying such a path as this: but look you off to the East, and if you see a sheet of shining white, glistening like a plate of beaten silver through the openings of the smoke, why that is water. A noble stream is running thereaway, and I thought I got a glimpse of it a while since; but other thoughts came, and I lost it. It is a broad and swift river, such as the Lord has made many of its fellows in this desert. For here may natur' be seen in all its richness, trees alone excepted. Trees, which are to the 'arth, as fruits are to a garden; without them nothing can be pleasant, or thoroughly useful. Now watch all of you, with open eyes, for that stripe of glittering water: we shall not be safe until it is flowing between our trail and these sharp sighted Tetons."

The latter declaration was enough to ensure a vigilant look out for the desired stream, on the part of all the trapper's followers. With this object in view, the party proceeded in profound silence, the old man having admonished them of the necessity of caution, as they entered the clouds of smoke, which were rolling like masses of fog along the plain, more particularly over those spots where the fire had encountered occasional pools of stagnant water.

They travelled near a league in this manner, without obtaining the desired glimpse of the river. The fire was still raging in the distance, and as the air swept away the first vapour of the conflagration, fresh volumes rolled along the place, limiting the view. At length the old man, who had begun to betray some little uneasiness, which caused his followers to apprehend that even his acute faculties were beginning to be confused, in the mazes of the smoke, made a sudden pause, and dropping his rifle to the ground, he stood, apparently musing over some object at his feet. Middleton and the rest rode up to his side, and demanded the reason of the halt.

"Look ye, here," returned the trapper, pointing to the mutilated carcass of a horse, that lay more than half consumed in a little hollow of the ground; "here may you see the power of a prairie conflagration. The 'arth is moist, hereaway, and the grass has been taller than usual. This miserable beast has been caught in his bed. You see the bones; the crackling and scorched hide, and the grinning teeth. A thousand winters could not wither an animal so thoroughly, as the element has done it in a minute."

"And this might have been our fate," said Middleton, "had the flames come upon us, in our sleep!"

"Nay, I do not say that, I do not say that. Not but that man will burn as well as tinder; but, that being more reasoning than a horse, he would better know how to avoid the danger."

"Perhaps this then has been but the carcass of an animal, or he too would have fled?"

"See you these marks in the damp soil? Here have been his hoofs,—and there is a moccasin print, as I'm a sinner! The owner of the beast has tried hard to move him from the place, but it is in the instinct of the creatur' to be faint-hearted and obstinate in a fire."

"It is a well-known fact. But if the animal has had a rider, where is he?"

"Ay, therein lies the mystery," returned the trapper, stooping to examine the signs in the ground with a closer eye. "Yes, yes, it is plain there has been a long struggle atween the two. The master has tried hard to save his beast, and the flames must have been very greedy, or he would have had better success."

"Harkee, old trapper," interrupted Paul, pointing to a little distance, where the ground was drier, and the herbage had, in consequence, been less luxuriant; "just call them two horses. Yonder lies another."

"The boy is right! can it be, that the Tetons have been caught in their own snares? Such things do happen; and here is an example to all evil-doers. Ay, look you here, this is iron; there have been some white inventions about the trappings of the beast—it must be so—it must be so—a party of the knaves have been skirting in the grass after us, while their friends have fired the prairie, and look you at the consequences; they have lost their beasts, and happy have they been if their own souls are not now skirting along the path, which leads to the Indian heaven."

"They had the same expedient at command as yourself," rejoined Middleton, as the party slowly proceeded, approaching the other carcass, which lay directly on their route.

"I know not that. It is not every savage that carries his steel and flint, or as good a rifle-pan as this old friend of mine. It is slow making a fire with two sticks, and little time was given to consider, or invent, just at this spot, as you may see by yon streak of flame, which is flashing along afore the wind, as if it were on a trail of powder. It is not many minutes since the fire has passed here away, and it may be well to look at our primings, not that I would willingly combat the Tetons, God forbid! but if a fight needs be, it is always wise to get the first shot."

"This has been a strange beast, old man," said Paul, who had pulled the bridle, or rather halter of his steed, over the second carcass, while the rest of the party were already passing, in their eagerness to proceed; "a strange horse do I call it; it had neither head nor hoofs!"

"The fire has not been idle," returned the trapper, keeping his eye vigilantly employed in profiting by those glimpses of the horizon, which the whirling smoke offered to his examination. "It would soon bake you a buffaloe whole, or for that matter powder his hoofs and horns into white ashes. Shame, shame, old Hector: as for the captain's pup, it is to be expected that he would show his want of years, and I may say, I hope without offence, his want of education too; but for a hound, like you, who have lived so long in the forest afore you came into these plains, it is very disgraceful, Hector, to be showing your teeth, and growling at the carcass of a roasted horse, the same as if you were telling your master that you had found the trail of a grizzly bear."

"I tell you, old trapper, this is no horse; neither in hoofs, head, nor hide."

"Anan! Not a horse? Your eyes are good for the bees and for the hollow trees, my lad, but—bless me, the boy is right! That I should mistake the hide of a buffaloe, scorched and crimped as it is, for the carcass of a horse! Ah's me! The time has been, my men, when I would tell you the name of a beast, as far as eye could reach, and that too with most of the particulars of colour, age, and sex."

"An inestimable advantage have you then enjoyed, venerable venator!" observed the attentive naturalist. "The man who can make these distinctions in a desert, is saved the pain of many a weary walk, and often of an enquiry that in its result proves useless. Pray tell me, did your exceeding excellence of vision extend so far as to enable you to decide on their order, or genus?"

"I know not what you mean by your orders of genius."

"No!" interrupted the bee-hunter, a little disdainfully for him, when speaking to his aged friend; "now, old trapper, that is admitting your ignorance of the English language, in a way I should not expect from a man of your experience and understanding. By order, our comrade means whether they go in promiscuous droves, like a swarm that is following its queen-bee, or in single file, as you often see the buffaloes trailing each other through a prairie. And as for genius, I'm sure that is a word well understood, and in every body's mouth. There is the congress-man in our district, and that tonguey little fellow, who puts out the paper in our county, they are both so called, for their smartness; which is what the Doctor means, as I take it, seeing that he seldom speaks without some considerable meaning."

When Paul finished this very clever explanation he looked behind him with an expression, which, rightly interpreted, would have said—"You see, though I don't often trouble myself in these matters, I am no fool."

Ellen admired Paul for anything but his learning. There was enough in his frank, fearless, and manly character, backed as it was by great personal attraction, to awaken her sympathies, without the necessity of prying into his mental attainments. The poor girl reddened like a rose, her pretty fingers played with the belt, by which she sustained herself on the horse, and she hurriedly observed, as if anxious to direct the attentions of the other listeners from a weakness, on which her own thoughts could not bear to dwell—

"And this is not a horse, after all?"

"It is nothing more, nor less, than the hide of a buffaloe," continued the trapper, who had been no less puzzled by the explanation of Paul, than by the language of the Doctor; "the hair is beneath; the fire has run over it as you see; for being fresh, the flames could take no hold. The beast has not been long killed, and it may be that some of the beef is still hereaway."

"Lift the corner of the skin, old trapper," said Paul, with the tone of one, who felt, as if he had now proved his right to mingle his voice in any council; "if there is a morsel of the hump left, it must be well cooked, and it shall be welcome."

The old man laughed, heartily, at the conceit of his companion. Thrusting his foot beneath the skin, it moved. Then it was suddenly cast aside, and an Indian warrior sprang from its cover, to his feet, with an agility, that bespoke how urgent he deemed the occasion.

## CHAPTER XXIV

I would it were bed-time, Hal, and all well.  
—Shakspeare.

A second glance sufficed to convince the whole of the startled party, that the young Pawnee, whom they had already encountered, again stood before them. Surprise kept both sides mute, and more than a minute was passed in surveying each other, with eyes of astonishment, if not of distrust. The wonder of the young warrior was, however, much more tempered and dignified than that of his Christian acquaintances. While Middleton and Paul felt the tremor, which shook the persons of their dependant companions, thrilling through their own quickened blood, the glowing eye of the Indian rolled from one to another, as if it could never quail before the rudest assaults. His gaze, after making the circuit of every wondering countenance, finally settled in a steady look on the equally immovable features of the trapper. The silence was first broken by Dr. Battius, in the ejaculation of—"Order, primates; genus, homo; species, prairie!"

"Ay—ay—the secret is out," said the old trapper, shaking his head, like one who congratulated himself on having mastered the mystery of some knotty difficulty. "The lad has been in the grass for a cover; the fire has come upon him in his sleep, and having lost his horse, he has been driven to save himself under that fresh hide of a buffalo. No bad invention, when powder and flint were wanting to kindle a ring. I warrant me, now, this is a clever youth, and one that it would be safe to journey with! I will speak to him kindly, for anger can at least serve no turn of ours. My brother is welcome again," using the language, which the other understood; "the Tetons have been smoking him, as they would a racoon."

The young Pawnee rolled his eye over the place, as if he were examining the terrific danger from which he had just escaped, but he disdained to betray the smallest emotion, at its imminency. His brow contracted, as he answered to the remark of the trapper by saying —

"A Teton is a dog. When the Pawnee war-whoop is in their ears, the whole nation howls."

"It is true. The imps are on our trail, and I am glad to meet a warrior, with the tomahawk in his hand, who does not love them. Will my brother lead my children to his village? If the Siouxes follow on our path, my young men shall help him to strike them."

The young Pawnee turned his eyes from one to another of the strangers, in a keen scrutiny, before he saw fit to answer so important an interrogatory. His examination of the males was short, and apparently satisfactory. But his gaze was fastened long and admiringly, as in their former interview, on the surpassing and unwonted beauty of a being so fair and so unknown as Inez. Though his glance wandered, for moments, from her countenance to the more intelligible and yet extraordinary charms of Ellen, it did not fail to return promptly to the study of a creature who, in the view of his unpractised eye and untutored imagination, was formed with all that perfection, with which the youthful poet is apt to endow the glowing images of his brain. Nothing so fair, so ideal, so every way worthy to reward the courage and self-devotion of a warrior, had ever before been encountered on the prairies, and the young brave appeared to be deeply and intuitively sensible to the influence of so rare a model of the loveliness of the sex. Perceiving, however, that his gaze gave uneasiness to the subject of his admiration, he withdrew his eyes, and laying his hand impressively on his chest, he, modestly, answered—

"My father shall be welcome. The young men of my nation shall hunt with his sons; the chiefs shall smoke with the grey-head. The Pawnee girls will sing in the ears of his daughters."

"And if we meet the Tetons?" demanded the trapper, who wished to understand, thoroughly, the more important conditions of this new alliance.

"The enemy of the Big-knives shall feel the blow of the Pawnee."

"It is well. Now let my brother and I meet in council, that we may not go on a crooked path, but that our road to his village may be like the flight of the pigeons."

The young Pawnee made a significant gesture of assent and followed the other a little apart, in order to be removed from all danger of interruption from the reckless Paul, or the abstracted naturalist. Their conference was short, but, as it was conducted in the sententious manner of the natives, it served to make each of the parties acquainted with all the necessary information of the other. When they rejoined their associates, the old man saw fit to explain a portion of what had passed between them, as follows—

"Ay, I was not mistaken," he said; "this good-looking young warrior—for good-looking and noble-looking he is, though a little horrified perhaps with paint—this good-looking youth, then, tells me he is out on the scout for these very Tetons. His party was not strong enough to strike the devils, who are down from their towns in great numbers to hunt the buffalo, and runners have gone to the Pawnee villages for aid. It would seem that this lad is a fearless boy, for he has been hanging on their skirts alone, until, like ourselves, he was driven to the grass for a cover. But he tells me more, my men, and what I am mainly sorry to hear, which is, that the cunning Mahtoree instead of going to blows with the squatter, has become his friend, and that both broods, red and white, are on our heels, and outlying around this very burning plain to circumvent us to our destruction."

"How knows he all this to be true?" demanded Middleton.

"Anan?"

"In what manner does he know, that these things are so?"

"In what manner! Do you think newspapers and town criers are needed to tell a scout what is doing on the prairies, as they are in the bosom of the States? No gossiping woman, who hurries from house to house to spread evil of her neighbour, can carry tidings with her

tongue, so fast as these people will spread their meaning, by signs and warnings, that they alone understand. 'Tis their l'arning, and what is better, it is got in the open air, and not within the walls of a school. I tell you, captain, that what he says is true."

"For that matter," said Paul, "I'm ready to swear to it. It is reasonable, and therefore it must be true."

"And well you might, lad; well you might. He furthermore declares, that my old eyes for once were true to me, and that the river lies, hereaway, at about the distance of half a league. You see the fire has done most of its work in that quarter, and our path is clouded in smoke. He also agrees that it is needful to wash our trail in water. Yes, we must put that river atween us and the Sioux eyes, and then, by the favour of the Lord, not forgetting our own industry, we may gain the village of the Loups."

"Words will not forward us a foot," said Middleton; "let us move."

The old man assented, and the party once more prepared to renew its route. The Pawnee threw the skin of the buffaloe over his shoulder and led the advance, casting many a stolen glance behind him as he proceeded, in order to fix his gaze on the extraordinary and, to him, unaccountable loveliness of the unconscious Inez.

An hour sufficed to bring the fugitives to the bank of the stream, which was one of the hundred rivers that serve to conduct, through the mighty arteries of the Missouri and Mississippi, the waters of that vast and still uninhabited region to the Ocean. The river was not deep, but its current was troubled and rapid. The flames had scorched the earth to its very margin, and as the warm streams of the fluid mingled, in the cooler air of the morning, with the smoke of the raging conflagration, most of its surface was wrapped in a mantle of moving vapour. The trapper pointed out the circumstance with pleasure, saying, as he assisted Inez to dismount on the margin of the watercourse—

"The knaves have outwitted themselves! I am far from certain that I should not have fired the prairie, to have got the benefit of this very smoke to hide our movements, had not the heartless imps saved us the trouble. I've known such things done in my day, and done with success. Come, lady, put your tender foot upon the ground—for a fearful time has it been to one of your breeding and skeary qualities. Ah's me! what have I not known the young, and the delicate, and the virtuous, and the modest, to undergo, in my time, among the horrors and circumventions of Indian warfare! Come, it is a short quarter of a mile to the other bank, and then our trail, at least, will be broken."

Paul had by this time assisted Ellen to dismount, and he now stood looking, with rueful eyes, at the naked banks of the river. Neither tree nor shrub grew along its borders, with the exception of here and there a solitary thicket of low bushes, from among which it would not have been an easy matter to have found a dozen stems of a size sufficient to make an ordinary walking-stick.

"Harkee, old trapper," the moody-looking bee-hunter exclaimed; "it is very well to talk of the other side of this ripple of a river, or brook, or whatever you may call it, but in my judgment it would be a smart rifle that would throw its lead across it—that is, to any detriment to Indian, or deer."

"That it would—that it would; though I carry a piece, here, that has done its work in time of need, at as great a distance."

"And do you mean to shoot Ellen and the captain's lady across; or do you intend them to go, trout fashion, with their mouths under water?"

"Is this river too deep to be forded?" asked Middleton, who, like Paul, began to consider the impossibility of transporting her, whose safety he valued more than his own, to the opposite shore.

"When the mountains above feed it with their torrents, it is, as you see, a swift and powerful stream. Yet have I crossed its sandy bed, in my time, without wetting a knee. But we have the Sioux horses; I warrant me, that the kicking imps will swim like so many deer."

"Old trapper," said Paul, thrusting his fingers into his mop of a head, as was usual with him, when any difficulty confounded his philosophy, "I have swam like a fish in my day, and I can do it again, when there is need; nor do I much regard the weather; but I question if you get Nelly to sit a horse, with this water whirling like a mill-race before her eyes; besides, it is manifest the thing is not to be done dry shod."

"Ah, the lad is right. We must to our inventions, therefore, or the river cannot be crossed." Then, cutting the discourse short, he turned to the Pawnee, and explained to him the difficulty which existed in relation to the women. The young warrior listened gravely, and throwing the buffaloe-skin from his shoulder he immediately commenced, assisted by the occasional aid of the understanding old man, the preparations necessary to effect this desirable object.

The hide was soon drawn into the shape of an umbrella top, or an inverted parachute, by thongs of deer-skin, with which both the labourers were well provided. A few light sticks served to keep the parts from collapsing, or falling in. When this simple and natural expedient was arranged, it was placed on the water, the Indian making a sign that it was ready to receive its freight. Both Inez and Ellen hesitated to trust themselves in a bark of so frail a construction, nor would Middleton or Paul consent that they should do so, until each had assured himself, by actual experiment, that the vessel was capable of sustaining a load much heavier than it was destined to receive. Then, indeed, their scruples were reluctantly overcome, and the skin was made to receive its precious burden.

"Now leave the Pawnee to be the pilot," said the trapper; "my hand is not so steady as it used to be; but he has limbs like toughened hickory. Leave all to the wisdom of the Pawnee."

The husband and lover could not well do otherwise, and they were fain to become deeply interested, it is true, but passive spectators of this primitive species of ferrying. The Pawnee selected the beast of Mahtoree, from among the three horses, with a readiness that proved he was far from being ignorant of the properties of that noble animal, and throwing himself upon its back, he rode into the margin of the river. Thrusting an end of his lance into the hide, he bore the light vessel up against the stream, and giving his steed the rein, they pushed boldly into the current. Middleton and Paul followed, pressing as nigh the bark as prudence would at all warrant. In this manner the young warrior bore his precious cargo to the opposite bank in perfect safety, without the slightest inconvenience to the passengers, and with a steadiness and celerity which proved that both horse and rider were not unused to the operation. When the shore

was gained, the young Indian undid his work, threw the skin over his shoulder, placed the sticks under his arm, and returned, without speaking, to transfer the remainder of the party, in a similar manner, to what was very justly considered the safer side of the river.

"Now, friend Doctor," said the old man, when he saw the Indian plunging into the river a second time, "do I know there is faith in yonder Red-skin. He is a good-looking, ay, and an honest-looking youth, but the winds of Heaven are not more deceitful than these savages, when the devil has fairly beset them. Had the Pawnee been a Teton, or one of them heartless Mingoes, that used to be prowling through the woods of York, a time back, that is, some sixty years ago, we should have seen his back and not his face turned towards us. My heart had its misgivings when I saw the lad choose the better horse, for it would be as easy to leave us with that beast, as it would for a nimble pigeon to part company from a flock of noisy and heavy winged crows. But you see that truth is in the boy, and make a Red-skin once your friend, he is yours so long as you deal honestly by him."

"What may be the distance to the sources of this stream?" demanded Doctor Battius, whose eyes were rolling over the whirling eddies of the current, with a very portentous expression of doubt. "At what distance may its secret springs be found?"

"That may be as the weather proves. I warrant me your legs would be a-weary before you had followed its bed into the Rocky Mountains; but then there are seasons when it might be done without wetting a foot."

"And in what particular divisions of the year do these periodical seasons occur?"

"He that passes this spot a few months from this time, will find that foaming water-course a desert of drifting sand."

The naturalist pondered deeply. Like most others, who are not endowed with a superfluity of physical fortitude, the worthy man had found the danger of passing the river, in so simple a manner, magnifying itself in his eyes so rapidly, as the moment of adventure approached, that he actually contemplated the desperate effort of going round the river, in order to escape the hazard of crossing it. It may not be necessary to dwell on the incredible ingenuity, with which terror will at any time prop a tottering argument. The worthy Obed had gone over the whole subject, with commendable diligence, and had just arrived at the consoling conclusion, that there was nearly as much glory in discerning the hidden sources of so considerable a stream, as in adding a plant, or an insect, to the lists of the learned, when the Pawnee reached the shore for the second time. The old man took his seat, with the utmost deliberation, in the vessel of skin (so soon as it had been duly arranged for his reception), and having carefully disposed of Hector between his legs, he beckoned to his companion to occupy the third place.

The naturalist placed a foot in the frail vessel, as an elephant will try a bridge, or a horse is often seen to make a similar experiment, before he will trust the whole of his corporeal treasure on the dreaded flat, and then withdrew, just as the old man believed he was about to seat himself.

"Venerable venator," he said, mournfully, "this is a most unscientific bark. There is an inward monitor which bids me distrust its security!"

"Anan?" said the old man, who was pinching the ears of the hound, as a father would play with the same member in a favourite child.

"I incline not to this irregular mode of experimenting on fluids. The vessel has neither form, nor proportions."

"It is not as handsomely turned as I have seen a canoe in birchen bark, but comfort may be taken in a wigwam as well as in a palace."

"It is impossible that any vessel constructed on principles so repugnant to science can be safe. This tub, venerable hunter, will never reach the opposite shore in safety."

"You are a witness of what it has done."

"Ay; but it was an anomaly in prosperity. If exceptions were to be taken as rules, in the government of things, the human race would speedily be plunged in the abysses of ignorance. Venerable trapper, this expedient, in which you would repose your safety, is, in the annals of regular inventions, what a *lusus naturae* may be termed in the lists of natural history—a monster!"

How much longer Doctor Battius might have felt disposed to prolong the discourse, it is difficult to say, for in addition to the powerful personal considerations, which induced him to procrastinate an experiment which was certainly not without its dangers, the pride of reason was beginning to sustain him in the discussion. But, fortunately for the credit of the old man's forbearance, when the naturalist reached the word, with which he terminated his last speech, a sound arose in the air that seemed a sort of supernatural echo to the idea itself. The young Pawnee, who had awaited the termination of the incomprehensible discussion, with grave and characteristic patience, raised his head, and listened to the unknown cry, like a stag, whose mysterious faculties had detected the footsteps of the distant hounds in the gale. The trapper and the Doctor were not, however, entirely so uninstructed as to the nature of the extraordinary sounds. The latter recognised in them the well-known voice of his own beast, and he was about to rush up the little bank, which confined the current, with all the longings of strong affection, when *Asinus* himself galloped into view, at no great distance, urged to the unnatural gait by the impatient and brutal *Weucha*, who bestrode him.

The eyes of the Teton, and those of the fugitives met. The former raised a long, loud, and piercing yell, in which the notes of exultation were fearfully blended with those of warning. The signal served for a finishing blow to the discussion on the merits of the bark, the Doctor stepping as promptly to the side of the old man, as if a mental mist had been miraculously removed from his eyes. In another instant the steed of the young Pawnee was struggling with the torrent.

The utmost strength of the horse was needed to urge the fugitives, beyond the flight of arrows that came sailing through the air, at the next moment. The cry of *Weucha* had brought fifty of his comrades to the shore, but fortunately among them all, there was not one of a rank sufficient to entitle him to the privilege of bearing a fusee. One half the stream, however, was not passed, before the form of Mahtoree himself was seen on its bank, and an ineffectual discharge of firearms announced the rage and disappointment of the chief. More than once the trapper had raised his rifle, as if about to try its power on his enemies, but he as often lowered it, without firing. The eyes of the Pawnee warrior glared like those of the cougar, at the sight of so many of the hostile tribe, and he answered the



impotent effort of their chief, by tossing a hand into the air in contempt, and raising the war-cry of his nation. The challenge was too taunting to be endured. The Tetons dashed into the stream in a body, and the river became dotted with the dark forms of beasts and riders.

There was now a fearful struggle for the friendly bank. As the Dahcotahs advanced with beasts, which had not, like that of the Pawnee, expended their strength in former efforts, and as they moved unincumbered by any thing but their riders, the speed of the pursuers greatly outstripped that of the fugitives. The trapper, who clearly comprehended the whole danger of their situation, calmly turned his eyes from the Tetons to his young Indian associate, in order to examine whether the resolution of the latter began to falter, as the former lessened the distance between them. Instead of betraying fear, however, or any of that concern which might so readily have been excited by the peculiarity of his risk, the brow of the young warrior contracted to a look which indicated high and deadly hostility.

"Do you greatly value life, friend Doctor?" demanded the old man, with a sort of philosophical calmness, which made the question doubly appalling to his companion.

"Not for itself," returned the naturalist, sipping some of the water of the river from the hollow of his hand, in order to clear his husky throat. "Not for itself, but exceedingly, inasmuch as natural history has so deep a stake in my existence. Therefore—"

"Ay!" resumed the other, who mused too deeply to dissect the ideas of the Doctor with his usual sagacity, "'tis in truth the history of nature, and a base and craven feeling it is! Now is life as precious to this young Pawnee, as to any governor in the States, and he might save it, or at least stand some chance of saving it, by letting us go down the stream; and yet you see he keeps his faith manfully, and like an Indian warrior. For myself, I am old, and willing to take the fortune that the Lord may see fit to give, nor do I conceal that you are of much benefit to mankind; and it is a crying shame, if not a sin, that so fine a youth as this should lose his scalp for two beings so worthless as ourselves. I am therefore disposed, provided that it shall prove agreeable to you, to tell the lad to make the best of his way, and to leave us to the mercy of the Tetons."

"I repel the proposition, as repugnant to nature, and as treason to science!" exclaimed the alarmed naturalist. "Our progress is miraculous; and as this admirable invention moves with so wonderful a facility, a few more minutes will serve to bring us to land."

The old man regarded him intently for an instant, and shaking his head he said—

"Lord, what a thing is fear! it transforms the creature's of the world and the craft of man, making that which is ugly, seemly in our eyes, and that which is beautiful, unsightly! Lord, Lord, what a thing is fear!"

A termination was, however, put to the discussion, by the increasing interest of the chase. The horses of the Dahcotahs had, by this time, gained the middle of the current, and their riders were already filling the air with yells of triumph. At this moment Middleton and Paul who had led the females to a little thicket, appeared again on the margin of the stream, menacing their enemies with the rifle.

"Mount, mount," shouted the trapper, the instant he beheld them; "mount and fly, if you value those who lean on you for help. Mount, and leave us in the hands of the Lord."

"Stoop your head, old trapper," returned the voice of Paul, "down with ye both into your nest. The Teton devil is in your line; down with your heads and make way for a Kentucky bullet."

The old man turned his head, and saw that the eager Mahtoree, who preceded his party some distance, had brought himself nearly in a line with the bark and the bee-hunter, who stood perfectly ready to execute his hostile threat. Bending his body low, the rifle was discharged, and the swift lead whizzed harmlessly past him, on its more distant errand. But the eye of the Teton chief was not less quick and certain than that of his enemy. He threw himself from his horse the moment preceding the report, and sunk into the water. The beast snorted with terror and anguish, throwing half his form out of the river in a desperate plunge. Then he was seen drifting away in the torrent, and dyeing the turbid waters with his blood.

The Teton chief soon re-appeared on the surface, and understanding the nature of his loss, he swam with vigorous strokes to the nearest of the young men, who relinquished his steed, as a matter of course, to so renowned a warrior. The incident, however, created a confusion in the whole of the Dahcotah band, who appeared to await the intention of their leader, before they renewed their efforts to reach the shore. In the mean time the vessel of skin had reached the land, and the fugitives were once more united on the margin of the river.

The savages were now swimming about in indecision, as a flock of pigeons is often seen to hover in confusion after receiving a heavy discharge into its leading column, apparently hesitating on the risk of storming a bank so formidably defended. The well-known precaution of Indian warfare prevailed, and Mahtoree, admonished by his recent adventure, led his warriors back to the shore from which they had come, in order to relieve their beasts, which were already becoming unruly.

"Now mount you, with the tender ones, and ride for yonder hillock," said the trapper; "beyond it, you will find another stream, into which you must enter, and turning to the sun, follow its bed for a mile, until you reach a high and sandy plain; there will I meet you. Go; mount; this Pawnee youth and I, and my stout friend the physician, who is a desperate warrior, are men enough to keep the bank, seeing that show and not use is all that is needed."

Middleton and Paul saw no use in wasting their breath in remonstrances against this proposal. Glad to know that their rear was to be covered, even in this imperfect manner, they hastily got their horses in motion, and soon disappeared on the required route. Some twenty or thirty minutes succeeded this movement before the Tetons on the opposite shore seemed inclined to enter on any new enterprise. Mahtoree was distinctly visible, in the midst of his warriors, issuing his mandates and betraying his desire for vengeance, by occasionally shaking an arm in the direction of the fugitives; but no step was taken, which appeared to threaten any further act of immediate hostility. At length a yell arose among the savages, which announced the occurrence of some fresh event. Then Ishmael and his sluggish sons were seen in the distance, and soon the whole of the united force moved down to the very limits of the stream. The squatter proceeded to examine the position of his enemies, with his usual coolness, and, as if to try the power of his rifle, he sent a bullet among them, with a force sufficient to do execution, even at the distance at which he stood.

"Now let us depart!" exclaimed Obed, endeavouring to catch a furtive glimpse of the lead, which he fancied was whizzing at his very ear; "we have maintained the bank in a gallant manner, for a sufficient length of time; quite as much military skill is to be displayed in a retreat, as in an advance."

The old man cast a look behind him, and seeing that the equestrians had reached the cover of the hill, he made no objections to the proposal. The remaining horse was given to the Doctor, with instructions to pursue the course just taken by Middleton and Paul. When the naturalist was mounted and in full retreat, the trapper and the young Pawnee stole from the spot in such a manner as to leave their enemies some time in doubt as to their movements. Instead, however, of proceeding across the plain towards the hill, a route on which they must have been in open view, they took a shorter path, covered by the formation of the ground, and intersected the little water-course at the point where Middleton had been directed to leave it, and just in season to join his party. The Doctor had used so much diligence in the retreat, as to have already overtaken his friends, and of course all the fugitives were again assembled.

The trapper now looked about him for some convenient spot, where the whole party might halt, as he expressed it, for some five or six hours.

"Halt!" exclaimed the Doctor, when the alarming proposal reached his ears; "venerable hunter, it would seem, that on the contrary, many days should be passed in industrious flight."

Middleton and Paul were both of this opinion, and each in his particular manner expressed as much.

The old man heard them with patience, but shook his head like one who was unconvinced, and then answered all their arguments, in one general and positive reply.

"Why should we fly?" he asked. "Can the legs of mortal men outstrip the speed of horses? Do you think the Tetons will lie down and sleep; or will they cross the water and nose for our trail? Thanks be to the Lord, we have washed it well in this stream, and if we leave the place with discretion and wisdom, we may yet throw them off its track. But a prairie is not a wood. There a man may journey long, caring for nothing but the prints his moccasin leaves, whereas in these open plains a runner, placed on yonder hill, for instance, could see far on every side of him, like a hovering hawk looking down on his prey. No, no; night must come, and darkness be upon us, afore we leave this spot. But listen to the words of the Pawnee; he is a lad of spirit, and I warrant me many is the hard race that he has run with the Sioux bands. Does my brother think our trail is long enough?" he demanded in the Indian tongue.

"Is a Teton a fish, that he can see it in the river?"

"But my young men think we should stretch it, until it reaches across the prairie."

"Mahtoree has eyes; he will see it."

"What does my brother counsel?"

The young warrior studied the heavens a moment, and appeared to hesitate. He mused some time with himself, and then he replied, like one whose opinion was fixed—

"The Dahcotahs are not asleep," he said; "we must lie in the grass."

"Ah! the lad is of my mind," said the old man, briefly explaining the opinion of his companion to his white friends. Middleton was obliged to acquiesce, and, as it was confessedly dangerous to remain upon their feet, each one set about assisting in the means to be adopted for their security. Inez and Ellen were quickly bestowed beneath the warm and not uncomfortable shelter of the buffalo skins, which formed a thick covering, and tall grass was drawn over the place, in such a manner as to evade any examination from a common eye. Paul and the Pawnee fettered the beasts and cast them to the earth, where, after supplying them with food, they were also left concealed in the fog of the prairie. No time was lost when these several arrangements were completed, before each of the others sought a place of rest and concealment, and then the plain appeared again deserted to its solitude.

The old man had advised his companions of the absolute necessity of their continuing for hours in this concealment. All their hopes of escape depended on the success of the artifice. If they might elude the cunning of their pursuers, by this simple and therefore less suspected expedient, they could renew their flight as the evening approached, and, by changing their course, the chance of final success would be greatly increased. Influenced by these momentous considerations the whole party lay, musing on their situation, until thoughts grew weary, and sleep finally settled on them all, one after another.

The deepest silence had prevailed for hours, when the quick ears of the trapper and the Pawnee were startled by a faint cry of surprise from Inez. Springing to their feet, like men, who were about to struggle for their lives, they found the vast plain, the rolling swells, the little hillock, and the scattered thickets, covered alike in one, white, dazzling sheet of snow.

"The Lord have mercy on ye all!" exclaimed the old man, regarding the prospect with a rueful eye; "now, Pawnee, do I know the reason why you studied the clouds so closely; but it is too late; it is too late! A squirrel would leave his trail on this light coating of the 'arth. Ha! there come the imps to a certainty. Down with ye all, down with ye; your chance is but small, and yet it must not be wilfully cast away."

The whole party was instantly concealed again, though many an anxious and stolen glance was directed through the tops of the grass, on the movements of their enemies. At the distance of half a mile, the Teton band was seen riding in a circuit, which was gradually contracting itself, and evidently closing upon the very spot where the fugitives lay. There was but little difficulty in solving the mystery of this movement. The snow had fallen in time to assure them that those they sought were in their rear, and they were now employed, with the unwearied perseverance and patience of Indian warriors, in circling the certain boundaries of their place of concealment.

Each minute added to the jeopardy of the fugitives. Paul and Middleton deliberately prepared their rifles, and as the occupied Mahtoree came, at length, within fifty feet of them, keeping his eyes riveted on the grass through which he rode, they levelled them together and pulled the triggers. The effort was answered by the mere snapping of the locks.

"Enough," said the old man, rising with dignity; "I have cast away the priming; for certain death would follow your rashness. Now

let us meet our fates like men. Cringing and complaining find no favour in Indian eyes.”

His appearance was greeted by a yell, that spread far and wide over the plain, and in a moment a hundred savages were seen riding madly to the spot. Mahtoree received his prisoners with great self-restraint, though a single gleam of fierce joy broke through his clouded brow, and the heart of Middleton grew cold as he caught the expression of that eye, which the chief turned on the nearly insensible but still lovely Inez.

The exultation of receiving the white captives was so great, as for a time to throw the dark and immovable form of their young Indian companion entirely out of view. He stood apart, disdaining to turn an eye on his enemies, as motionless as if he were frozen in that attitude of dignity and composure. But when a little time had passed, even this secondary object attracted the attention of the Tetons. Then it was that the trapper first learned, by the shout of triumph and the long drawn yell of delight, which burst at once from a hundred throats, as well as by the terrible name, which filled the air, that his youthful friend was no other than that redoubtable and hitherto invincible warrior, Hard-Heart.

## CHAPTER XXV

What, are ancient Pistol and you friends, yet?  
—Shakspeare.

The curtain of our imperfect drama must fall, to rise upon another scene. The time is advanced several days, during which very material changes had occurred in the situation of the actors. The hour is noon, and the place an elevated plain, that rose, at no great distance from the water, somewhat abruptly from a fertile bottom, which stretched along the margin of one of the numberless water-courses of that region. The river took its rise near the base of the Rocky Mountains, and, after washing a vast extent of plain, it mingled its waters with a still larger stream, to become finally lost in the turbid current of the Missouri.

The landscape was changed materially for the better; though the hand, which had impressed so much of the desert on the surrounding region, had laid a portion of its power on this spot. The appearance of vegetation was, however, less discouraging than in the more sterile wastes of the rolling prairies. Clusters of trees were scattered in greater profusion, and a long outline of ragged forest marked the northern boundary of the view. Here and there, on the bottom, were to be seen the evidences of a hasty and imperfect culture of such indigenous vegetables as were of a quick growth, and which were known to flourish, without the aid of art, in deep and alluvial soils. On the very edge of what might be called the table-land, were pitched the hundred lodges of a horde of wandering Siouzes. Their light tenements were arranged without the least attention to order. Proximity to the water seemed to be the only consideration which had been consulted in their disposition, nor had even this important convenience been always regarded. While most of the lodges stood along the brow of the plain, many were to be seen at greater distances, occupying such places as had first pleased the capricious eyes of their untutored owners. The encampment was not military, nor in the slightest degree protected from surprise by its position or defences. It was open on every side, and on every side as accessible as any other point in those wastes, if the imperfect and natural obstruction offered by the river be excepted. In short, the place bore the appearance of having been tenanted longer than its occupants had originally intended, while it was not wanting in the signs of readiness for a hasty, or even a compelled departure.

This was the temporary encampment of that portion of his people, who had long been hunting under the direction of Mahtoree, on those grounds which separated the stationary abodes of his nation, from those of the warlike tribes of the Pawnees. The lodges were tents of skin, high, conical, and of the most simple and primitive construction. The shield, the quiver, the lance and the bow of its master, were to be seen suspended from a light post before the opening, or door, of each habitation. The different domestic implements of his one, two, or three wives, as the brave was of greater or lesser renown, were carelessly thrown at its side, and here and there the round, full, patient countenance of an infant might be found peeping from its comfortless wrappers of bark, as, suspended by a deer-skin thong from the same post, it rocked in the passing air. Children of a larger growth were tumbling over each other in piles, the males, even at that early age, making themselves distinguished for that species of domination which, in after life, was to mark the vast distinction between the sexes. Youths were in the bottom, essaying their juvenile powers in curbing the wild steeds of their fathers, while here and there a truant girl was to be seen, stealing from her labours to admire their fierce and impatient daring.

Thus far the picture was the daily exhibition of an encampment confident in its security. But immediately in front of the lodges was a gathering, that seemed to forbode some movements of more than usual interest. A few of the withered and remorseless crones of the band were clustering together, in readiness to lend their fell voices, if needed, to aid in exciting their descendants to an exhibition, which their depraved tastes coveted, as the luxurious Roman dame witnessed the struggles and the agony of the gladiator. The men were subdivided into groups, assorted according to the deeds and reputations of the several individuals of whom they were composed.

They, who were of that equivocal age which admitted them to the hunts, while their discretion was still too doubtful to permit them to be trusted on the war-path, hung around the skirts of the whole, catching, from the fierce models before them, that gravity of demeanour and restraint of manner, which in time was to become so deeply ingrafted in their own characters. A few of the still older class, and who had heard the whoop in anger, were a little more presuming, pressing nigher to the chiefs, though far from presuming to mingle in their councils, sufficiently distinguished by being permitted to catch the wisdom which fell from lips so venerated. The ordinary warriors of the band were still less diffident, not hesitating to mingle among the chiefs of lesser note, though far from assuming the right to dispute the sentiments of any established brave, or to call in question the prudence of measures, that were recommended by the more gifted counsellors of the nation.

Among the chiefs themselves there was a singular compound of exterior. They were divided into two classes; those who were mainly indebted for their influence to physical causes, and to deeds in arms, and those who had become distinguished rather for their wisdom than for their services in the field. The former was by far the most numerous and the most important class. They were men of stature and mien, whose stern countenances were often rendered doubly imposing by those evidences of their valour, which had been roughly traced on their lineaments by the hands of their enemies. That class, which had gained its influence by a moral ascendancy was extremely limited. They were uniformly to be distinguished by the quick and lively expression of their eyes, by the air of distrust that marked their movements, and occasionally by the vehemence of their utterance in those sudden outbursts of the mind, by which their present consultations were, from time to time, distinguished.

In the very centre of a ring, formed by these chosen counsellors, was to be seen the person of the disquieted, but seemingly calm, Mahtoree. There was a conjunction of all the several qualities of the others in his person and character. Mind as well as matter had contributed to establish his authority. His scars were as numerous and deep as those of the whitest head in his nation; his limbs were in their greatest vigour; his courage at its fullest height. Endowed with this rare combination of moral and physical influence, the keenest eye in all that assembly was wont to lower before his threatening glance. Courage and cunning had established his ascendancy, and it

had been rendered, in some degree, sacred by time. He knew so well how to unite the powers of reason and force, that in a state of society, which admitted of a greater display of his energies, the Teton would in all probability have been both a conqueror and a despot.

A little apart from the gathering of the band, was to be seen a set of beings of an entirely different origin. Taller and far more muscular in their persons, the lingering vestiges of their Saxon and Norman ancestry were yet to be found beneath the swarthy complexions, which had been bestowed by an American sun. It would have been a curious investigation, for one skilled in such an enquiry, to have traced those points of difference, by which the offspring of the most western European was still to be distinguished from the descendant of the most remote Asiatic, now that the two, in the revolutions of the world, were approximating in their habits, their residence, and not a little in their characters. The group, of whom we write, was composed of the family of the squatter. They stood indolent, lounging, and inert, as usual when no immediate demand was made on their dormant energies, clustered in front of some four or five habitations of skin, for which they were indebted to the hospitality of their Teton allies. The terms of their unexpected confederation were sufficiently explained, by the presence of the horses and domestic cattle that were quietly grazing on the bottom beneath, under the jealous eyes of the spirited Hetty. Their wagons were drawn about the lodges, in a sort of irregular barrier, which at once manifested that their confidence was not entirely restored, while, on the other hand, their policy or indolence prevented any very positive exhibition of distrust. There was a singular union of passive enjoyment and of dull curiosity slumbering in every dull countenance, as each of the party stood leaning on his rifle, regarding the movements of the Sioux conference. Still no sign of expectation or interest escaped from the youngest among them, the whole appearing to emulate the most phlegmatic of their savage allies, in an exhibition of patience. They rarely spoke; and when they did it was in some short and contemptuous remark, which served to put the physical superiority of a white man, and that of an Indian, in a sufficiently striking point of view. In short, the family of Ishmael appeared now to be in the plenitude of an enjoyment, which depended on inactivity, but which was not entirely free from certain confused glimmerings of a perspective, in which their security stood in some little danger of a rude interruption from Teton treachery. Abiram, alone, formed a solitary exception to this state of equivocal repose.

After a life passed in the commission of a thousand mean and insignificant villainies, the mind of the kidnapper had become hardy enough to attempt the desperate adventure, which has been laid before the reader, in the course of the narrative. His influence over the bolder, but less active, spirit of Ishmael was far from great, and had not the latter been suddenly expelled from a fertile bottom, of which he had taken possession, with intent to keep it, without much deference to the forms of law, he would never have succeeded in enlisting the husband of his sister in an enterprise that required so much decision and forethought. Their original success and subsequent disappointment have been seen; and Abiram now sat apart, plotting the means, by which he might secure to himself the advantages of his undertaking, which he perceived were each moment becoming more uncertain, through the open admiration of Mahtoree for the innocent subject of his villany. We shall leave him to his vacillating and confused expedients, in order to pass to the description of certain other personages in the drama.

There was still another corner of the picture that was occupied. On a little bank, at the extreme right of the encampment, lay the forms of Middleton and Paul. Their limbs were painfully bound with thongs, cut from the skin of a bison, while, by a sort of refinement in cruelty, they were so placed, that each could see a reflection of his own misery in the case of his neighbour. Within a dozen yards of them a post was set firmly in the ground, and against it was bound the light and Apollo-like person of Hard-Heart. Between the two stood the trapper, deprived of his rifle, his pouch and his horn, but otherwise left in a sort of contemptuous liberty. Some five or six young warriors, however, with quivers at their backs, and long tough bows dangling from their shoulders, who stood with grave watchfulness at no great distance from the spot, sufficiently proclaimed how fruitless any attempt to escape, on the part of one so aged and so feeble, might prove. Unlike the other spectators of the important conference, these individuals were engaged in a discourse that for them contained an interest of its own.

"Captain," said the bee-hunter with an expression of comical concern, that no misfortune could depress in one of his buoyant feelings, "do you really find that accursed strap of untanned leather cutting into your shoulder, or is it only the tickling in my own arm that I feel?"

"When the spirit suffers so deeply, the body is insensible to pain," returned the more refined, though scarcely so spirited Middleton; "would to Heaven that some of my trusty artillerists might fall upon this accursed encampment!"

"You might as well wish that these Teton lodges were so many hives of hornets, and that the insects would come forth and battle with yonder tribe of half naked savages." Then, chuckling with his own conceit, the bee-hunter turned away from his companion, and sought a momentary relief from his misery, by imagining that so wild an idea might be realised, and fancying the manner, in which the attack would upset even the well established patience of an Indian.

Middleton was glad to be silent; but the old man, who had listened to their words, drew a little nigher, and continued the discourse.

"Here is likely to be a merciless and a hellish business!" he said, shaking his head in a manner to prove that even his experience was at a loss for a remedy in so trying a dilemma. "Our Pawnee friend is already staked for the torture, and I well know, by the eye and the countenance of the great Sioux, that he is leading on the temper of his people to further enormities."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, writhing in his bonds to catch a glimpse of the other's melancholy face; "you ar' skilled in Indian tongues, and know somewhat of Indian deviltries. Go you to the council, and tell their chiefs in my name, that is to say, in the name of Paul Hover, of the state of Kentucky, that provided they will guarantee the safe return of one Ellen Wade into the States, they are welcome to take his scalp when and in such manner as best suits their amusements; or, if-so-be they will not trade on these conditions, you may throw in an hour or two of torture before hand, in order to sweeten the bargain to their damnable appetites."

"Ah! lad, it is little they would hearken to such an offer, knowing, as they do, that you are already like a bear in a trap, as little able to fight as to fly. But be not down-hearted, for the colour of a white man is sometimes his death-warrant among these far tribes of savages, and sometimes his shield. Though they love us not, cunning often ties their hands. Could the red nations work their will, trees would shortly be growing again on the ploughed fields of America, and woods would be whitened with Christian bones. No one can doubt that, who knows the quality of the love which a Red-skin bears a Pale-face; but they have counted our numbers until their

memories fail them, and they are not without their policy. Therefore is our fate unsettled; but I fear me there is small hope left for the Pawnee!"

As the old man concluded, he walked slowly towards the subject of his latter observation, taking his post at no great distance from his side. Here he stood, observing such a silence and mien as became him to manifest, to a chief so renowned and so situated as his captive associate. But the eye of Hard-Heart was fastened on the distance, and his whole air was that of one whose thoughts were entirely removed from the present scene.

"The Siouzes are in council on my brother," the trapper at length observed, when he found he could only attract the other's attention by speaking.

The young partisan turned his head with a calm smile as he answered "They are counting the scalps over the lodge of Hard-Heart!"

"No doubt, no doubt; their tempers begin to mount, as they remember the number of Tetons you have struck, and better would it be for you now, had more of your days been spent in chasing the deer, and fewer on the war-path. Then some childless mother of this tribe might take you in the place of her lost son, and your time would be filled in peace."

"Does my father think that a warrior can ever die? The Master of Life does not open his hand to take away his gifts again. When He wants His young men He calls them, and they go. But the Red-skin He has once breathed on lives for ever."

"Ay, this is a more comfortable and a more humble faith than that which yonder heartless Teton harbours. There is something in these Loups which opens my inmost heart to them; they seem to have the courage, ay, and the honesty, too, of the Delawares of the hills. And this lad—it is wonderful, it is very wonderful; but the age, and the eye, and the limbs are as if they might have been brothers! Tell me, Pawnee, have you ever in your traditions heard of a mighty people who once lived on the shores of the Salt-lake, hard by the rising sun?"

"The earth is white, by people of the colour of my father."

"Nay, nay, I speak not now of any strollers, who have crept into the land to rob the lawful owners of their birth-right, but of a people who are, or rather were, what with nature and what with paint, red as the berry on the bush."

"I have heard the old men say, that there were bands, who hid themselves in the woods under the rising sun, because they dared not come upon the open prairies to fight with men."

"Do not your traditions tell you of the greatest, the bravest, and the wisest nation of Red-skins that the Wahcondah has ever breathed upon?"

Hard-Heart raised his head, with a loftiness and dignity that even his bonds could not repress, as he answered—

"Has age blinded my father; or does he see so many Siouzes, that he believes there are no longer any Pawnees?"

"Ah! such is mortal vanity and pride!" exclaimed the disappointed old man, in English. "Natur' is as strong in a Red-skin, as in the bosom of a man of white gifts. Now would a Delaware conceit himself far mightier than a Pawnee, just as a Pawnee boasts himself to be of the princes of the 'arth. And so it was atween the Frenchers of the Canadas and the red-coated English, that the king did use to send into the States, when States they were not, but outcrying and petitioning provinces, they fou't and they fou't, and what marvellous boastings did they give forth to the world of their own valour and victories, while both parties forgot to name the humble soldier of the land, who did the real service, but who, as he was not privileged then to smoke at the great council fire of his nation, seldom heard of his deeds, after they were once bravely done."

When the old man had thus given vent to the nearly dormant, but far from extinct, military pride, that had so unconsciously led him into the very error he deprecated, his eye, which had begun to quicken and glimmer with some of the ardour of his youth, softened and turned its anxious look on the devoted captive, whose countenance was also restored to its former cold look of abstraction and thought.

"Young warrior," he continued in a voice that was growing tremulous, "I have never been father, or brother. The Wahcondah made me to live alone. He never tied my heart to house or field, by the cords with which the men of my race are bound to their lodges; if he had, I should not have journeyed so far, and seen so much. But I have tarried long among a people, who lived in those woods you mention, and much reason did I find to imitate their courage and love their honesty. The Master of Life has made us all, Pawnee, with a feeling for our kind. I never was a father, but well do I know what is the love of one. You are like a lad I valued, and I had even begun to fancy that some of his blood might be in your veins. But what matters that? You are a true man, as I know by the way in which you keep your faith; and honesty is a gift too rare to be forgotten. My heart yearns to you, boy, and gladly would I do you good."

The youthful warrior listened to the words, which came from the lips of the other with a force and simplicity that established their truth, and he bowed his head on his naked bosom, in testimony of the respect with which he met the proffer. Then lifting his dark eye to the level of the view, he seemed to be again considering of things removed from every personal consideration. The trapper, who well knew how high the pride of a warrior would sustain him, in those moments he believed to be his last, awaited the pleasure of his young friend, with a meekness and patience that he had acquired by his association with that remarkable race. At length the gaze of the Pawnee began to waver; and then quick, flashing glances were turned from the countenance of the old man to the air, and from the air to his deeply marked lineaments again, as if the spirit, which governed their movements, was beginning to be troubled.

"Father," the young brave finally answered in a voice of confidence and kindness, "I have heard your words. They have gone in at my ears, and are now within me. The white-headed Long-knife has no son; the Hard-Heart of the Pawnees is young, but he is already the oldest of his family. He found the bones of his father on the hunting ground of the Osages, and he has sent them to the prairies of the Good Spirits. No doubt the great chief, his father, has seen them, and knows what is part of himself. But the Wahcondah will soon call to us both; you, because you have seen all that is to be seen in this country; and Hard-Heart, because he has need of a warrior, who is young. There is no time for the Pawnee to show the Pale-face the duty, that a son owes to his father."

"Old as I am, and miserable and helpless as I now stand, to what I once was, I may live to see the sun go down in the prairie. Does my son expect to do as much?"

"The Tetons are counting the scalps on my lodge!" returned the young chief, with a smile whose melancholy was singularly illuminated by a gleam of triumph.

"And they find them many. Too many for the safety of its owner, while he is in their revengeful hands. My son is not a woman, and he looks on the path he is about to travel with a steady eye. Has he nothing to whisper in the ears of his people, before he starts? These legs are old, but they may yet carry me to the forks of the Loup river."

"Tell them that Hard-Heart has tied a knot in his wampum for every Teton," burst from the lips of the captive, with that vehemence with which sudden passion is known to break through the barriers of artificial restraint "if he meets one of them all, in the prairies of the Master of Life, his heart will become Sioux!"

"Ah that feeling would be a dangerous companion for a man with white gifts to start with on so solemn a journey," muttered the old man in English. "This is not what the good Moravians said to the councils of the Delawares, nor what is so often preached, to the White-skins in the settlements, though, to the shame of the colour be it said, it is so little heeded. Pawnee, I love you; but being a Christian man, I cannot be the runner to bear such a message."

"If my father is afraid the Tetons will hear him, let him whisper it softly to our old men."

"As for fear, young warrior, it is no more the shame of a Pale-face than of a Red-skin. The Wahcondah teaches us to love the life he gives; but it is as men love their hunts, and their dogs, and their carabines, and not with the doting that a mother looks upon her infant. The Master of Life will not have to speak aloud twice when he calls my name. I am as ready to answer to it now, as I shall be tomorrow, or at any time it may please his mighty will. But what is a warrior without his traditions? Mine forbid me to carry your words."

The chief made a dignified motion of assent, and here there was great danger that those feelings of confidence, which had been so singularly awakened, would as suddenly subside. But the heart of the old man had been too sensibly touched, through long dormant but still living recollections, to break off the communication so rudely. He pondered for a minute, and then bending his look wistfully on his young associate, again continued—

"Each warrior must be judged by his gifts. I have told my son what I cannot, but let him open his ears to what I can do. An elk shall not measure the prairie much swifter than these old legs, if the Pawnee will give me a message that a white man may bear."

"Let the Pale-face listen," returned the other, after hesitating a single instant longer, under a lingering sensation of his former disappointment. "He will stay here till the Siouxes have done counting the scalps of their dead warriors. He will wait until they have tried to cover the heads of eighteen Tetons with the skin of one Pawnee; he will open his eyes wide, that he may see the place where they bury the bones of a warrior."

"All this will I, and may I, do, noble boy."

"He will mark the spot, that he may know it."

"No fear, no fear that I shall forget the place," interrupted the other, whose fortitude began to give way under so trying an exhibition of calmness and resignation.

"Then I know that my father will go to my people. His head is grey, and his words will not be blown away with the smoke. Let him get on my lodge, and call the name of Hard-Heart aloud. No Pawnee will be deaf. Then let my father ask for the colt, that has never been ridden, but which is sleeker than the buck, and swifter than the elk."

"I understand you, boy, I understand you," interrupted the attentive old man; "and what you say shall be done, ay, and well done too, or I'm but little skilled in the wishes of a dying Indian."

"And when my young men have given my father the halter of that colt, he will lead him by a crooked path to the grave of Hard-Heart?"

"Will I! ay, that I will, brave youth, though the winter covers these plains in banks of snow, and the sun is hidden as much by day as by night. To the head of the holy spot will I lead the beast, and place him with his eyes looking towards the setting sun."

"And my father will speak to him, and tell him, that the master, who has fed him since he was foaled, has now need of him."

"That, too, will I do; though the Lord he knows that I shall hold discourse with a horse, not with any vain conceit that my words will be understood, but only to satisfy the cravings of Indian superstition. Hector, my pup, what think you, dog, of talking to a horse?"

"Let the grey-beard speak to him with the tongue of a Pawnee," interrupted the young victim, perceiving that his companion had used an unknown language for the preceding speech.

"My son's will shall be done. And with these old hands, which I had hoped had nearly done with bloodshed, whether it be of man or beast, will I slay the animal on your grave!"

"It is good," returned the other, a gleam of satisfaction flitting across his features. "Hard-Heart will ride his horse to the blessed prairies, and he will come before the Master of Life like a chief!"

The sudden and striking change, which instantly occurred in the countenance of the Indian, caused the trapper to look aside, when he perceived that the conference of the Siouxes had ended, and that Mahtoree, attended by one or two of the principal warriors, was deliberately approaching his intended victim.

## CHAPTER XXVI

I am not prone to weeping, as our sex  
Commonly are.  
—But I have that honourable  
Grief lodged here, which burns worse than  
Tears drown  
—Shakspeare.

When within twenty feet of the prisoners, the Tetons stopped, and their leader made a sign to the old man to draw nigh. The trapper obeyed, quitting the young Pawnee with a significant look, which was received, as it was meant, for an additional pledge that he would never forget his promise. So soon as Mahtoree found that the other had stopped within reach of him, he stretched forth his arm, and laying a hand upon the shoulder of the attentive old man, he stood regarding him, a minute, with eyes that seemed willing to penetrate the recesses of his most secret thoughts.

“Is a Pale-face always made with two tongues?” he demanded, when he found that, as usual, with the subject of this examination, he was as little intimidated by his present frown, as moved by any apprehensions of the future.

“Honesty lies deeper than the skin.”

“It is so. Now let my father hear me. Mahtoree has but one tongue, the grey-head has many. They may be all straight, and none of them forked. A Sioux is no more than a Sioux, but a Pale-face is every thing! He can talk to the Pawnee, and the Konza, and the Omawhaw, and he can talk to his own people.”

“Ay, there are linguists in the settlements that can do still more. But what profits it all? The Master of Life has an ear for every language!”

“The grey-head has done wrong. He has said one thing when he meant another. He has looked before him with his eyes, and behind him with his mind. He has ridden the horse of a Sioux too hard; he has been the friend of a Pawnee, and the enemy of my people.”

“Teton, I am your prisoner. Though my words are white, they will not complain. Act your will.”

“No. Mahtoree will not make a white hair red. My father is free. The prairie is open on every side of him. But before the grey-head turns his back on the Siouzes, let him look well at them, that he may tell his own chief, how great is a Dahcotah!”

“I am not in a hurry to go on my path. You see a man with a white head, and no woman, Teton; therefore shall I not run myself out of breath, to tell the nations of the prairies what the Siouzes are doing.”

“It is good. My father has smoked with the chiefs at many councils,” returned Mahtoree, who now thought himself sufficiently sure of the other's favour to go more directly to his object. “Mahtoree will speak with the tongue of his very dear friend and father. A young Pale-face will listen when an old man of that nation opens his mouth. Go; my father will make what a poor Indian says fit for a white ear.”

“Speak aloud!” said the trapper, who readily understood the metaphorical manner, in which the Teton expressed a desire that he should become an interpreter of his words into the English language; “speak, my young men listen. Now, captain, and you too, friend bee-hunter, prepare yourselves to meet the deviltries of this savage, with the stout hearts of white warriors. If you find yourselves giving way under his threats, just turn your eyes on that noble-looking Pawnee, whose time is measured with a hand as niggardly, as that with which a trader in the towns gives forth the fruits of the Lord, inch by inch, in order to satisfy his covetousness. A single look at the boy will set you both up in resolution.”

“My brother has turned his eyes on the wrong path,” interrupted Mahtoree, with a complacency that betrayed how unwilling he was to offend his intended interpreter.

“The Dahcotah will speak to my young men?”

“After he has sung in the ear of the flower of the Pale-faces.”

“The Lord forgive the desperate villain!” exclaimed the old man in English. “There are none so tender, or so young, or so innocent, as to escape his ravenous wishes. But hard words and cold looks will profit nothing; therefore it will be wise to speak him fair. Let Mahtoree open his mouth.”

“Would my father cry out, that the women and children should hear the wisdom of chiefs! We will go into the lodge and whisper.”

As the Teton ended, he pointed significantly towards a tent, vividly emblazoned with the history of one of his own boldest and most commended exploits, and which stood a little apart from the rest, as if to denote it was the residence of some privileged individual of the band. The shield and quiver at its entrance were richer than common, and the high distinction of a fusee, attested the importance of its proprietor. In every other particular it was rather distinguished by signs of poverty than of wealth. The domestic utensils were fewer in number and simpler in their forms, than those to be seen about the openings of the meanest lodges, nor was there a single one of those high-priced articles of civilised life, which were occasionally bought of the traders, in bargains that bore so hard on the ignorant natives. All these had been bestowed, as they had been acquired, by the generous chief, on his subordinates, to purchase an influence that might render him the master of their lives and persons; a species of wealth that was certainly more noble in itself, and far dearer to his ambition.

The old man well knew this to be the lodge of Mahtoree, and, in obedience to the sign of the chief, he held his way towards it with slow and reluctant steps. But there were others present, who were equally interested in the approaching conference, whose apprehensions were not to be so easily suppressed. The watchful eye and jealous ears of Middleton had taught him enough to fill his



soul with horrible forebodings. With an incredible effort he succeeded in gaining his feet, and called aloud to the retiring trapper—

“I conjure you, old man, if the love you bore my parents was more than words, or if the love you bear your God is that of a Christian man, utter not a syllable that may wound the ear of that innocent—”

Exhausted in spirit and fettered in limbs, he then fell, like an inanimate log, to the earth, where he lay like one dead.

Paul had however caught the clue and completed the exhortation, in his peculiar manner.

“Harkee, old trapper,” he shouted, vainly endeavouring at the same time to make a gesture of defiance with his hand; “if you art about to play the interpreter, speak such words to the ears of that damnable savage, as becomes a white man to use, and a heathen to hear. Tell him, from me, that if he does or says the thing that is uncivil to the girl, called Nelly Wade, that I’ll curse him with my dying breath; that I’ll pray for all good Christians in Kentucky to curse him; sitting and standing; eating and drinking, fighting, praying, or at horse-races; in-doors and outdoors; in summer or winter, or in the month of March in short I’ll—ay, it art a fact, morally true—I’ll haunt him, if the ghost of a Pale-face can contrive to lift itself from a grave made by the hands of a Red-skin!”

Having thus ventured the most terrible denunciation he could devise, and the one which, in the eyes of the honest bee-hunter, there seemed the greatest likelihood of his being able to put in execution, he was obliged to await the fruits of his threat, with that resignation which would be apt to govern a western border-man who, in addition to the prospects just named, had the advantage of contemplating them in fetters and bondage. We shall not detain the narrative, to relate the quaint morals with which he next endeavoured to cheer the drooping spirits of his more sensitive companion, or the occasional pithy and peculiar benedictions that he pronounced, on all the bands of the Dahcotahs, commencing with those whom he accused of stealing or murdering, on the banks of the distant Mississippi, and concluding, in terms of suitable energy, with the Teton tribe. The latter more than once received from his lips curses as sententious and as complicated as that celebrated anathema of the church, for a knowledge of which most unlettered Protestants are indebted to the pious researches of the worthy Tristram Shandy. But as Middleton recovered from his exhaustion he was fain to appease the boisterous temper of his associate, by admonishing him of the uselessness of such denunciations, and of the possibility of their hastening the very evil he deprecated, by irritating the resentments of a race, who were sufficiently fierce and lawless, even in their most pacific moods.

In the mean time the trapper and the Sioux chief pursued their way to the lodge. The former had watched with painful interest the expression of Mahtoree’s eye, while the words of Middleton and Paul were pursuing their footsteps, but the mien of the Indian was far too much restrained and self-guarded, to permit the smallest of his emotions to escape through any of those ordinary outlets, by which the condition of the human volcano is commonly betrayed. His look was fastened on the little habitation they approached; and, for the moment, his thoughts appeared to brood alone on the purposes of this extraordinary visit.

The appearance of the interior of the lodge corresponded with its exterior. It was larger than most of the others, more finished in its form, and finer in its materials; but there its superiority ceased. Nothing could be more simple and republican than the form of living that the ambitious and powerful Teton chose to exhibit to the eyes of his people. A choice collection of weapons for the chase, some three or four medals, bestowed by the traders and political agents of the Canadas as a homage to, or rather as an acknowledgment of, his rank, with a few of the most indispensable articles of personal accommodation, composed its furniture. It abounded in neither venison, nor the wild-beef of the prairies; its crafty owner having well understood that the liberality of a single individual would be abundantly rewarded by the daily contributions of a band. Although as pre-eminent in the chase as in war, a deer or a buffaloe was never seen to enter whole into his lodge. In return, an animal was rarely brought into the encampment, that did not contribute to support the family of Mahtoree. But the policy of the chief seldom permitted more to remain than sufficed for the wants of the day, perfectly assured that all must suffer before hunger, the bane of savage life, could lay its fell fangs on so important a victim.

Immediately beneath the favourite bow of the chief, and encircled in a sort of magical ring of spears, shields, lances and arrows, all of which had in their time done good service, was suspended the mysterious and sacred medicine-bag. It was highly-wrought in wampum, and profusely ornamented with beads and porcupine’s quills, after the most cunning devices of Indian ingenuity. The peculiar freedom of Mahtoree’s religious creed has been more than once intimated, and by a singular species of contradiction, he appeared to have lavished his attentions on this emblem of a supernatural agency, in a degree that was precisely inverse to his faith. It was merely the manner in which the Sioux imitated the well-known expedient of the Pharisees, “in order that they might be seen of men.”

The tent had not, however, been entered by its owner since his return from the recent expedition. As the reader has already anticipated, it had been made the prison of Inez and Ellen. The bride of Middleton was seated on a simple couch of sweet-scented herbs covered with skins. She had already suffered so much, and witnessed so many wild and unlooked-for events, within the short space of her captivity, that every additional misfortune fell with a diminished force on her seemingly devoted head. Her cheeks were bloodless, her dark and usually animated eye was contracted in an expression of settled concern, and her form appeared shrinking and sensitive, nearly to extinction. But in the midst of these evidences of natural weakness, there were at times such an air of pious resignation, such gleams of meek but holy hope lighting her countenance, as might well have rendered it a question whether the hapless captive was most a subject of pity, or of admiration. All the precepts of father Ignatius were riveted in her faithful memory, and not a few of his pious visions were floating before her imagination. Sustained by so sacred resolutions, the mild, the patient and the confiding girl was bowing her head to this new stroke of Providence, with the same sort of meekness as she would have submitted to any other prescribed penitence for her sins, though nature, at moments, warred powerfully, with so compelled a humility.

On the other hand, Ellen had exhibited far more of the woman, and consequently of the passions of the world. She had wept until her eyes were swollen and red. Her cheeks were flushed and angry, and her whole mien was distinguished by an air of spirit and resentment, that was not a little, however, qualified by apprehensions for the future. In short, there was that about the eye and step of the betrothed of Paul, which gave a warranty that should happier times arrive, and the constancy of the bee-hunter finally meet with its reward, he would possess a partner every way worthy to cope with his own thoughtless and buoyant temperament.

There was still another and a third figure in that little knot of females. It was the youngest, the most highly gifted, and, until now, the

most favoured of the wives of the Teton. Her charms had not been without the most powerful attraction in the eyes of her husband, until they had so unexpectedly opened on the surpassing loveliness of a woman of the Pale-faces. From that hapless moment the graces, the attachment, the fidelity of the young Indian, had lost their power to please. Still the complexion of Tachechana, though less dazzling than that of her rival, was, for her race, clear and healthy. Her hazel eye had the sweetness and playfulness of the antelope's; her voice was soft and joyous as the song of the wren, and her happy laugh was the very melody of the forest. Of all the Sioux girls, Tachechana (or the Fawn) was the lightest-hearted and the most envied. Her father had been a distinguished brave, and her brothers had already left their bones on a distant and dreary war-path. Numberless were the warriors, who had sent presents to the lodge of her parents, but none of them were listened to until a messenger from the great Mahtoree had come. She was his third wife, it is true, but she was confessedly the most favoured of them all. Their union had existed but two short seasons, and its fruits now lay sleeping at her feet, wrapped in the customary ligatures of skin and bark, which form the swaddlings of an Indian infant.

At the moment, when Mahtoree and the trapper arrived at the opening of the lodge, the young Sioux wife was seated on a simple stool, turning her soft eyes, with looks that varied, like her emotions, with love and wonder, from the unconscious child to those rare beings, who had filled her youthful and uninstructed mind with so much admiration and astonishment. Though Inez and Ellen had passed an entire day in her sight, it seemed as if the longings of her curiosity were increasing with each new gaze. She regarded them as beings of an entirely different nature and condition from the females of the prairie. Even the mystery of their complicated attire had its secret influence on her simple mind, though it was the grace and charms of sex, to which nature has made every people so sensible, that most attracted her admiration. But while her ingenuous disposition freely admitted the superiority of the strangers over the less brilliant attractions of the Dahcotah maidens, she had seen no reason to deprecate their advantages. The visit that she was now about to receive, was the first which her husband had made to the tent since his return from the recent inroad, and he was ever present to her thoughts, as a successful warrior, who was not ashamed, in the moments of inaction, to admit the softer feelings of a father and a husband.

We have every where endeavoured to show that while Mahtoree was in all essentials a warrior of the prairies, he was much in advance of his people in those acquirements which announce the dawns of civilisation. He had held frequent communion with the traders and troops of the Canadas, and the intercourse had unsettled many of those wild opinions which were his birthright, without perhaps substituting any others of a nature sufficiently definite to be profitable. His reasoning was rather subtle than true, and his philosophy far more audacious than profound. Like thousands of more enlightened beings, who fancy they are able to go through the trials of human existence without any other support than their own resolutions, his morals were accommodating and his motive selfish. These several characteristics will be understood always with reference to the situation of the Indian, though little apology is needed for finding resemblances between men, who essentially possess the same nature, however it may be modified by circumstances.

Notwithstanding the presence of Inez and Ellen, the entrance of the Teton warrior into the lodge of his favourite wife, was made with the tread and mien of a master. The step of his moccasin was noiseless, but the rattling of his bracelets, and of the silver ornaments of his leggings, sufficed to announce his approach, as he pushed aside the skin covering of the opening of the tent, and stood in the presence of its inmates. A faint cry of pleasure burst from the lips of Tachechana in the suddenness of her surprise, but the emotion was instantly suppressed in that subdued demeanour which should characterise a matron of her tribe. Instead of returning the stolen glance of his youthful and secretly rejoicing wife, Mahtoree moved to the couch, occupied by his prisoners, and placed himself in the haughty, upright attitude of an Indian chief, before their eyes. The old man had glided past him, and already taken a position suited to the office he had been commanded to fill.

Surprise kept the females silent and nearly breathless. Though accustomed to the sight of savage warriors, in the horrid panoply of their terrible profession, there was something so startling in the entrance, and so audacious in the inexplicable look of their conqueror, that the eyes of both sunk to the earth, under a feeling of terror and embarrassment. Then Inez recovered herself, and addressing the trapper, she demanded, with the dignity of an offended gentlewoman, though with her accustomed grace, to what circumstance they owed this extraordinary and unexpected visit. The old man hesitated; but clearing his throat, like one who was about to make an effort to which he was little used, he ventured on the following reply—

"Lady," he said, "a savage is a savage, and you are not to look for the uses and formalities of the settlements on a bleak and windy prairie. As these Indians would say, fashions and courtesies are things so light, that they would blow away. As for myself, though a man of the forest, I have seen the ways of the great, in my time, and I am not to learn that they differ from the ways of the lowly. I was long a serving-man in my youth, not one of your beck-and-nod runners about a household, but a man that went through the servitude of the forest with his officer, and well do I know in what manner to approach the wife of a captain. Now, had I the ordering of this visit, I would first have hemmed aloud at the door, in order that you might hear that strangers were coming, and then I—"

"The manner is indifferent," interrupted Inez, too anxious to await the prolix explanations of the old man; "why is the visit made?"

"Therein shall the savage speak for himself. The daughters of the Pale-faces wish to know why the Great Teton has come into his lodge?"

Mahtoree regarded his interrogator with a surprise, which showed how extraordinary he deemed the question. Then placing himself in a posture of condescension, after a moment's delay, he answered—

"Sing in the ears of the dark-eye. Tell her the lodge of Mahtoree is very large, and that it is not full. She shall find room in it, and none shall be greater than she. Tell the light-hair, that she too may stay in the lodge of a brave, and eat of his venison. Mahtoree is a great chief. His hand is never shut."

"Teton," returned the trapper, shaking his head in evidence of the strong disapprobation with which he heard this language, "the tongue of a Red-skin must be coloured white, before it can make music in the ears of a Pale-face. Should your words be spoken, my daughters would shut their ears, and Mahtoree would seem a trader to their eyes. Now listen to what comes from a grey-head, and then speak accordingly. My people is a mighty people. The sun rises on their eastern and sets on their western border. The land is filled with bright-eyed and laughing girls, like these you see—ay, Teton, I tell no lie," observing his auditor to start with an air of distrust

—“bright-eyed and pleasant to behold, as these before you.”

“Has my father a hundred wives!” interrupted the savage, laying his finger on the shoulder of the trapper, with a look of curious interest in the reply.

“No, Dahcotah. The Master of Life has said to me, Live alone; your lodge shall be the forest; the roof of your wigwam, the clouds. But, though never bound in the secret faith which, in my nation, ties one man to one woman, often have I seen the workings of that kindness which brings the two together. Go into the regions of my people; you will see the daughters of the land, fluttering through the towns like many-coloured and joyful birds in the season of blossoms. You will meet them, singing and rejoicing, along the great paths of the country, and you will hear the woods ringing with their laughter. They are very excellent to behold, and the young men find pleasure in looking at them.”

“Hugh,” ejaculated the attentive Mahtoree.

“Ay, well may you put faith in what you hear, for it is no lie. But when a youth has found a maiden to please him, he speaks to her in a voice so soft, that none else can hear. He does not say, My lodge is empty and there is room for another; but shall I build, and will the virgin show me near what spring she would dwell? His voice is sweeter than honey from the locust, and goes into the ear thrilling like the song of a wren. Therefore, if my brother wishes his words to be heard, he must speak with a white tongue.”

Mahtoree pondered deeply, and in a wonder that he did not attempt to conceal. It was reversing all the order of society, and, according to his established opinions, endangering the dignity of a chief, for a warrior thus to humble himself before a woman. But as Inez sat before him, reserved and imposing in air, utterly unconscious of his object, and least of all suspecting the true purport of so extraordinary a visit, the savage felt the influence of a manner to which he was unaccustomed. Bowing his head, in acknowledgment of his error, he stepped a little back, and placing himself in an attitude of easy dignity, he began to speak with the confidence of one who had been no less distinguished for eloquence, than for deeds in arms. Keeping his eyes riveted on the unconscious bride of Middleton, he proceeded in the following words—

“I am a man with a red skin, but my eyes are dark. They have been open since many snows. They have seen many things—they know a brave from a coward. When a boy, I saw nothing but the bison and the deer. I went to the hunts, and I saw the cougar and the bear. This made Mahtoree a man. He talked with his mother no more. His ears were open to the wisdom of the old men. They told him every thing—they told him of the Big-knives. He went on the war-path. He was then the last; now, he is the first. What Dahcotah dare say he will go before Mahtoree into the hunting grounds of the Pawnees? The chiefs met him at their doors, and they said, My son is without a home. They gave him their lodges, they gave him their riches, and they gave him their daughters. Then Mahtoree became a chief, as his fathers had been. He struck the warriors of all the nations, and he could have chosen wives from the Pawnees, the Omawhaws, and the Konzas; but he looked at the hunting grounds, and not at his village. He thought a horse was pleasanter than a Dahcotah girl. But he found a flower on the prairies, and he plucked it, and brought it into his lodge. He forgets that he is the master of a single horse. He gives them all to the stranger, for Mahtoree is not a thief; he will only keep the flower he found on the prairie. Her feet are very tender. She cannot walk to the door of her father; she will stay, in the lodge of a valiant warrior for ever.”

When he had finished this extraordinary address, the Teton awaited to have it translated, with the air of a suitor who entertained no very disheartening doubts of his success. The trapper had not lost a syllable of the speech, and he now prepared himself to render it into English in such a manner as should leave its principal idea even more obscure than in the original. But as his reluctant lips were in the act of parting, Ellen lifted a finger, and with a keen glance from her quick eye, at the still attentive Inez, she interrupted him.

“Spare your breath,” she said, “all that a savage says is not to be repeated before a Christian lady.”

Inez started, blushed, and bowed with an air of reserve, as she coldly thanked the old man for his intentions, and observed that she could now wish to be alone.

“My daughters have no need of ears to understand what a great Dahcotah says,” returned the trapper, addressing himself to the expecting Mahtoree. “The look he has given, and the signs he has made, are enough. They understand him; they wish to think of his words; for the children of great braves, such as their fathers are, do nothing without much thought.”

With this explanation, so flattering to the energy of his eloquence, and so promising to his future hopes, the Teton was every way content. He made the customary ejaculation of assent, and prepared to retire. Saluting the females, in the cold but dignified manner of his people, he drew his robe about him, and moved from the spot where he had stood, with an air of ill-concealed triumph.

But there had been a stricken, though a motionless and unobserved auditor of the foregoing scene. Not a syllable had fallen from the lips of the long and anxiously expected husband, that had not gone directly to the heart of his unoffending wife. In this manner had he wooed her from the lodge of her father, and it was to listen to similar pictures of the renown and deeds of the greatest brave in her tribe, that she had shut her ears to the tender tales of so many of the Sioux youths.

As the Teton turned to leave his lodge, in the manner just mentioned, he found this unexpected and half-forgotten object before him. She stood, in the humble guise and with the shrinking air of an Indian girl, holding the pledge of their former love in her arms, directly in his path. Starting, the chief regained the marble-like indifference of countenance, which distinguished in so remarkable a degree the restrained or more artificial expression of his features, and signed to her, with an air of authority to give place.

“Is not Tachechana the daughter of a chief?” demanded a subdued voice, in which pride struggled with anguish: “were not her brothers braves?”

“Go; the men are calling their partisan. He has no ears for a woman.”

“No,” replied the suppliant; “it is not the voice of Tachechana that you hear, but this boy, speaking with the tongue of his mother. He is the son of a chief, and his words will go up to his father’s ears. Listen to what he says. When was Mahtoree hungry and Tachechana had not food for him? When did he go on the path of the Pawnees and find it empty, that my mother did not weep? When did he come back with the marks of their blows, that she did not sing? What Sioux girl has given a brave a son like me? Look at me

well, that you may know me. My eyes are the eagle's. I look at the sun and laugh. In a little time the Dahcotahs will follow me to the hunts and on the war-path. Why does my father turn his eyes from the woman that gives me milk? Why has he so soon forgotten the daughter of a mighty Sioux?"

There was a single instant, as the exulting father suffered his cold eye to wander to the face of the laughing boy, that the stern nature of the Teton seemed touched. But shaking off the grateful sentiment, like one who would gladly be rid of any painful, because reproachful, emotion, he laid his hand calmly on the arm of his wife, and led her directly in front of Inez. Pointing to the sweet countenance that was beaming on her own, with a look of tenderness and commiseration, he paused, to allow his wife to contemplate a loveliness, which was quite as excellent to her ingenuous mind as it had proved dangerous to the character of her faithless husband. When he thought abundant time had passed to make the contrast sufficiently striking, he suddenly raised a small mirror, that dangled at her breast, an ornament he had himself bestowed, in an hour of fondness, as a compliment to her beauty, and placed her own dark image in its place. Wrapping his robe again about him, the Teton motioned to the trapper to follow, and stalked haughtily from the lodge, muttering, as he went—

"Mahtoree is very wise! What nation has so great a chief as the Dahcotahs?"

Tachechana stood frozen into a statue of humility. Her mild and usually joyous countenance worked, as if the struggle within was about to dissolve the connection between her soul and that more material part, whose deformity was becoming so loathsome. Inez and Ellen were utterly ignorant of the nature of her interview with her husband, though the quick and sharpened wits of the latter led her to suspect a truth, to which the entire innocence of the former furnished no clue. They were both, however, about to tender those sympathies, which are so natural to, and so graceful in the sex, when their necessity seemed suddenly to cease. The convulsions in the features of the young Sioux disappeared, and her countenance became cold and rigid, like chiselled stone. A single expression of subdued anguish, which had made its impression on a brow that had rarely before contracted with sorrow, alone remained. It was never removed, in all the changes of seasons, fortunes, and years, which, in the vicissitudes of a suffering, female, savage life, she was subsequently doomed to endure. As in the case of a premature blight, let the plant quicken and revive as it may, the effects of that withering touch were always present.

Tachechana first stripped her person of every vestige of those rude but highly prized ornaments, which the liberality of her husband had been wont to lavish on her, and she tendered them meekly, and without a murmur, as an offering to the superiority of Inez. The bracelets were forced from her wrists, the complicated mazes of beads from her leggings, and the broad silver band from her brow. Then she paused, long and painfully. But it would seem, that the resolution, she had once adopted, was not to be conquered by the lingering emotions of any affection, however natural. The boy himself was next laid at the feet of her supposed rival, and well might the self-abased wife of the Teton believe that the burden of her sacrifice was now full.

While Inez and Ellen stood regarding these several strange movements with eyes of wonder, a low soft musical voice was heard saying in a language, that to them was unintelligible—

"A strange tongue will tell my boy the manner to become a man. He will hear sounds that are new, but he will learn them, and forget the voice of his mother. It is the will of the Wahcondah, and a Sioux girl should not complain. Speak to him softly, for his ears are very little; when he is big, your words may be louder. Let him not be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman. Teach him to keep his eyes on the men. Show him how to strike them that do him wrong, and let him never forget to return blow for blow. When he goes to hunt, the flower of the Pale-faces," she concluded, using in bitterness the metaphor which had been supplied by the imagination of her truant husband, "will whisper softly in his ears that the skin of his mother was red, and that she was once the Fawn of the Dahcotahs."

Tachechana pressed a kiss on the lips of her son, and withdrew to the farther side of the lodge. Here she drew her light calico robe over her head, and took her seat, in token of humility, on the naked earth. All efforts, to attract her attention, were fruitless. She neither heard remonstrances, nor felt the touch. Once or twice her voice rose, in a sort of wailing song, from beneath her quivering mantle, but it never mounted into the wildness of savage music. In this manner she remained unseen for hours, while events were occurring without the lodge, which not only materially changed the complexion of her own fortunes, but left a lasting and deep impression on the future movements of the wandering Sioux.

## CHAPTER XXVII

I'll no swaggerers: I am in good name and fame with the very best:  
—shut the door;—there come no swaggerers here: I have not lived  
all this while, to have swaggering now: shut the door, I pray you.  
—Shakspeare.

Mahtoree encountered, at the door of his lodge, Ishmael, Abiram, and Esther. The first glance of his eye, at the countenance of the heavy-moulded squatter, served to tell the cunning Teton, that the treacherous truce he had made, with these dupes of his superior sagacity, was in some danger of a violent termination.

“Look you here, old grey-beard,” said Ishmael, seizing the trapper, and whirling him round as if he had been a top; “that I am tired of carrying on a discourse with fingers and thumbs, instead of a tongue, ar’ a natural fact; so you’ll play linguister and put my words into Indian, without much caring whether they suit the stomach of a Red-skin or not.”

“Say on, friend,” calmly returned the trapper; “they shall be given as plainly as you send them.”

“Friend!” repeated the squatter, eyeing the other for an instant, with an expression of indefinable meaning. “But it is no more than a word, and sounds break no bones, and survey no farms. Tell this thieving Sioux, then, that I come to claim the conditions of our solemn bargain, made at the foot of the rock.”

When the trapper had rendered his meaning into the Sioux language, Mahtoree demanded, with an air of surprise—

“Is my brother cold? buffalo skins are plenty. Is he hungry? Let my young men carry venison into his lodges.”

The squatter elevated his clenched fist in a menacing manner, and struck it with violence on the palm of his open hand, by way of confirming his determination, as he answered—

“Tell the deceitful liar, I have not come like a beggar to pick his bones, but like a freeman asking for his own; and have it I will. And, moreover, tell him I claim that you, too, miserable sinner as you ar’, should be given up to justice. There’s no mistake. My prisoner, my niece, and you. I demand the three at his hands, according to a sworn agreement.”

The immovable old man smiled, with an expression of singular intelligence, as he answered—

“Friend squatter, you ask what few men would be willing to grant. You would first cut the tongue from the mouth of the Teton, and then the heart from his bosom.”

“It is little that Ishmael Bush regards, who or what is damaged in claiming his own. But put you the questions in straight-going Indian, and when you speak of yourself, make such a sign as a white man will understand, in order that I may know there is no foul play.”

The trapper laughed in his silent fashion, and muttered a few words to himself before he addressed the chief—

“Let the Dahcotah open his ears very wide,” he said ‘that big words may have room to enter. His friend the Big-knife comes with an empty hand, and he says that the Teton must fill it.’”

“Wagh! Mahtoree is a rich chief. He is master of the prairies.”

“He must give the dark-hair.”

The brow of the chief contracted in an ominous frown, that threatened instant destruction to the audacious squatter; but as suddenly recollecting his policy, he craftily replied—

“A girl is too light for the hand of such a brave. I will fill it with buffaloes.”

“He says he has need of the light-hair, too; who has his blood in her veins.”

“She shall be the wife of Mahtoree; then the Long-knife will be the father of a chief.”

“And me,” continued the trapper, making one of those expressive signs, by which the natives communicate, with nearly the same facility as with their tongues, and turning to the squatter at the same time, in order that the latter might see he dealt fairly by him; “he asks for a miserable and worn-out trapper.”

The Dahcotah threw his arm over the shoulder of the old man, with an air of great affection, before he replied to this third and last demand.

“My friend is old,” he said, “and cannot travel far. He will stay with the Tetons, that they may learn wisdom from his words. What Sioux has a tongue like my father? No; let his words be very soft, but let them be very clear. Mahtoree will give skins and buffaloes. He will give the young men of the Pale-faces wives, but he cannot give away any who live in his own lodge.”

Perfectly satisfied, himself, with this laconic reply, the chief was moving towards his expecting counsellors, when suddenly returning, he interrupted the translation of the trapper by adding—

“Tell the Great Buffalo” (a name by which the Tetons had already christened Ishmael), “that Mahtoree has a hand which is always open. See,” he added, pointing to the hard and wrinkled visage of the attentive Esther, “his wife is too old, for so great a chief. Let him put her out of his lodge. Mahtoree loves him as a brother. He is his brother. He shall have the youngest wife of the Teton. Tachechana, the pride of the Sioux girls, shall cook his venison, and many braves will look at him with longing minds. Go, a Dahcotah is generous.”

The singular coolness, with which the Teton concluded this audacious proposal, confounded even the practised trapper. He stared after the retiring form of the Indian, with an astonishment he did not care to conceal, nor did he renew his attempt at interpretation until the person of Mahtoree was blended with the cluster of warriors, who had so long, and with so characteristic patience, awaited his

return.

"The Teton chief has spoken very plainly," the old man continued; "he will not give you the lady, to whom the Lord in heaven knows you have no claim, unless it be such as the wolf has to the lamb. He will not give you the child, you call your niece; and therein I acknowledge that I am far from certain he has the same justice on his side. Moreover, neighbour squatter, he flatly denies your demand for me, miserable and worthless as I am; nor do I think he has been unwise in so doing, seeing that I should have many reasons against journeying far in your company. But he makes you an offer, which it is right and convenient you should know. The Teton says through me, who am no more than a mouthpiece, and therein not answerable for the sin of his words, but he says, as this good woman is getting past the comely age, it is reasonable for you to tire of such a wife. He therefore tells you to turn her out of your lodge, and when it is empty, he will send his own favourite, or rather she that was his favourite, the 'Skipping Fawn,' as the Siouzes call her, to fill her place. You see, neighbour, though the Red-skin is minded to keep your property, he is willing to give you wherewithal to make yourself some return!"

Ishmael listened to these replies, to his several demands, with that species of gathering indignation, with which the dullest tempers mount into the most violent paroxysms of rage. He even affected to laugh at the conceit of exchanging his long-tried partner for the more flexible support of the youthful Tachechana, though his voice was hollow and unnatural in the effort. But Esther was far from giving the proposal so facetious a reception. Lifting her voice to its most audible key, she broke forth, after catching her breath like one who had been in some imminent danger of strangulation, as follows—

"Hoity-toity; who set an Indian up for a maker and breaker of the rights of wedded wives! Does he think a woman is a beast of the prairie, that she is to be chased from a village, by dog and gun. Let the bravest squaw of them all come forth and boast of her doings; can she show such a brood as mine? A wicked tyrant is that thieving Red-skin, and a bold rogue I warrant me. He would be captain in-doors, as well as out! An honest woman is no better in his eyes than one of your broomstick jumpers. And you, Ishmael Bush, the father of seven sons and so many comely daughters, to open your sinful mouth, except to curse him! Would ye disgrace colour, and family, and nation, by mixing white blood with red, and would ye be the parent of a race of mules! The devil has often tempted you, my man, but never before has he set so cunning a snare as this. Go back among your children, friend; go, and remember that you are not a prowling bear, but a Christian man, and thank God that you are a lawful husband!"

The clamour of Esther was anticipated by the judicious trapper. He had easily foreseen that her meek temper would overflow at so scandalous a proposal as repudiation, and he now profited by the tempest, to retire to a place where he was at least safe from any immediate violence on the part of her less excited, but certainly more dangerous husband. Ishmael, who had made his demands with a stout determination to enforce them, was diverted by the windy torrent, like many a more obstinate husband, from his purpose, and in order to appease a jealousy that resembled the fury with which the bear defends her cubs, was fain to retire to a distance from the lodge, that was known to contain the unoffending object of the sudden uproar.

"Let your copper-coloured minx come forth, and show her tawney beauty before the face of a woman who has heard more than one church bell, and seen a power of real quality," cried Esther, flourishing her hand in triumph, as she drove Ishmael and Abiram before her, like two truant boys, towards their own encampment. "I warrant me, I warrant me, here is one who would shortly talk her down! Never think to tarry here, my men; never think to shut an eye in a camp, through which the devil walks as openly as if he were a gentleman, and sure of his welcome. Here, you Abner, Enoch, Jesse, where are ye gotten to? Put to, put to; if that weak-minded, soft-feeling man, your father, eats or drinks again in this neighbourhood, we shall see him poisoned with the craft of the Red-skins. Not that I care, I, who comes into my place, when it is once lawfully empty; but, Ishmael, I never thought that you, who have had one woman with a white skin, would find pleasure in looking on a brazen—ay, that she is copper are a fact; you can't deny it, and I warrant me, brazen enough is she too!"

Against this ebullition of wounded female pride, the experienced husband made no other head, than by an occasional exclamation, which he intended to be precursor of a simple asseveration of his own innocence. The fury of the woman would not be appeased. She listened to nothing but her own voice, and consequently nothing was heard but her mandates to depart.

The squatter had collected his beasts and loaded his wagons, as a measure of precaution, before proceeding to the extremity he contemplated. Esther consequently found every thing favourable to her wishes. The young men stared at each other, as they witnessed the extraordinary excitement of their mother, but took little interest in an event which, in the course of their experience, had found so many parallels. By command of their father, the tents were thrown into the vehicles, as a sort of reprisal for the want of faith in their late ally, and then the train left the spot, in its usual listless and sluggish order.

As a formidable division of well-armed borderers protected the rear of the retiring party, the Siouzes saw it depart without manifesting the smallest evidence of surprise or resentment. The savage, like the tiger, rarely makes his attack on an enemy who expects him; and if the warriors of the Tetons meditated any hostility, it was in the still and patient manner with which the feline beasts watch for the incautious moment, in order to ensure the blow. The counsels of Mahtoree, however, on whom so much of the policy of his people depended, lay deep in the depository of his own thoughts. Perhaps he rejoiced at so easy a manner of getting rid of claims so troublesome; perhaps he awaited a fitting time to exhibit his power; or it even might be, that matters of so much greater importance were pressing on his mind, that it had not leisure to devote any of its faculties to an event of so much indifference.

But it would seem that while Ishmael made such a concession to the awakened feelings of Esther, he was far from abandoning his original intentions. His train followed the course of the river for a mile, and then it came to a halt on the brow of the elevated land, and in a place which afforded the necessary facilities. Here he again pitched his tents, unharnessed his teams, sent his cattle on the bottom, and, in short, made all the customary preparations to pass the night, with the same coolness and deliberation as if he had not hurled an irritating defiance into the teeth of his dangerous neighbours.

In the mean time the Tetons proceeded to the more regular business of the hour. A fierce and savage joy had existed in the camp, from the instant when it had been announced that their own chief was returning with the long-dreaded and hated partisan of their enemies. For many hours the crones of the tribe had been going from lodge to lodge, in order to stimulate the tempers of the warriors

to such a pass, as might leave but little room for mercy. To one they spoke of a son, whose scalp was drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge. To another, they enumerated his own scars, his disgraces, and defeats; with a third, they dwelt on his losses of skins and horses; and a fourth was reminded of vengeance by a significant question, concerning some flagrant adventure, in which he was known to have been a sufferer.

By these means the men had been so far excited as to have assembled, in the manner already related, though it still remained a matter of doubt how far they intended to carry their revenge. A variety of opinions prevailed on the policy of executing their prisoners; and Mahtoree had suspended the discussions, in order to ascertain how far the measure might propitiate, or retard, his own particular views. Hitherto the consultations had merely been preliminary, with a design that each chief might discover the number of supporters his particular views would be likely to obtain, when the important subject should come before a more solemn council of the tribe. The moment for the latter had now arrived, and the preparations were made with a dignity and solemnity suited to the momentous interests of the occasion.

With a refinement in cruelty, that none but an Indian would have imagined, the place, selected for this grave deliberation, was immediately about the post to which the most important of its subjects was attached. Middleton and Paul were brought in their bonds, and laid at the feet of the Pawnee; then the men began to take their places, according to their several claims to distinction. As warrior after warrior approached, he seated himself in the wide circle, with a mien as composed and thoughtful, as if his mind were actually in a condition to deal out justice, tempered, as it should be, with the heavenly quality of mercy. A place was reserved for three or four of the principal chiefs, and a few of the oldest of the women, as withered, as age, exposure, hardships, and lives of savage passions could make them, thrust themselves into the foremost circle, with a temerity, to which they were impelled by their insatiable desire for cruelty, and which nothing, but their years and their long tried fidelity to the nation, would have excused.

All, but the chiefs already named, were now in their places. These had delayed their appearance, in the vain hope that their own unanimity might smooth the way to that of their respective factions; for, notwithstanding the superior influence of Mahtoree, his power was to be maintained only by constant appeals to the opinions of his inferiors. As these important personages at length entered the circle in a body, their sullen looks and clouded brows, notwithstanding the time given to consultation, sufficiently proclaimed the discontent which reigned among them. The eye of Mahtoree was varying in its expression, from sudden gleams, that seemed to kindle with the burning impulses of his soul, to that cold and guarded steadiness, which was thought more peculiarly to become a chief in council. He took his seat, with the studied simplicity of a demagogue; though the keen and flashing glance, that he immediately threw around the silent assembly, betrayed the more predominant temper of a tyrant.

When all were present, an aged warrior lighted the great pipe of his people, and blew the smoke towards the four quarters of the heavens. So soon as this propitiatory offering was made, he tendered it to Mahtoree, who, in affected humility, passed it to a grey-headed chief by his side. After the influence of the soothing weed had been courted by all, a grave silence succeeded, as if each was not only qualified to, but actually did, think more deeply on the matters before them. Then an old Indian arose, and spoke as follows:—

“The eagle, at the falls of the endless river, was in its egg, many snows after my hand had struck a Pawnee. What my tongue says, my eyes have seen. Bohrecheena is very old. The hills have stood longer in their places, than he has been in his tribe, and the rivers were full and empty, before he was born; but where is the Sioux that knows it besides himself? What he says, they will hear. If any of his words fall to the ground, they will pick them up and hold them to their ears. If any blow away in the wind, my young men, who are very nimble, will catch them. Now listen. Since water ran and trees grew, the Sioux has found the Pawnee on his war-path. As the cougar loves the antelope, the Dahcotah loves his enemy. When the wolf finds the fawn, does he lie down and sleep? When the panther sees the doe at the spring, does he shut his eyes? You know that he does not. He drinks too; but it is of blood! A Sioux is a leaping panther, a Pawnee a trembling deer. Let my children hear me. They will find my words good. I have spoken.”

A deep guttural exclamation of assent broke from the lips of all the partisans of Mahtoree, as they listened to this sanguinary advice from one, who was certainly among the most aged men of the nation. That deeply seated love of vengeance, which formed so prominent a feature in their characters, was gratified by his metaphorical allusions, and the chief himself augured favourably of the success of his own schemes, by the number of supporters, who manifested themselves to be in favour of the counsels of his friend. But still unanimity was far from prevailing. A long and decorous pause was suffered to succeed the words of the first speaker, in order that all might duly deliberate on their wisdom, before another chief took on himself the office of refutation. The second orator, though past the prime of his days, was far less aged than the one who had preceded him. He felt the disadvantage of this circumstance, and endeavoured to counteract it, as far as possible, by the excess of his humility.

“I am but an infant,” he commenced, looking furtively around him, in order to detect how far his well-established character for prudence and courage contradicted his assertion. “I have lived with the women, since my father has been a man. If my head is getting grey, it is not because I am old. Some of the snow, which fell on it while I have been sleeping on the war-paths, has frozen there, and the hot sun, near the Osage villages, has not been strong enough to melt it.” A low murmur was heard, expressive of admiration of the services to which he thus artfully alluded. The orator modestly awaited for the feeling to subside a little, and then he continued, with increasing energy, encouraged by their commendations. “But the eyes of a young brave are good. He can see very far. He is a lynx. Look at me well. I will turn my back, that you may see both sides of me. Now do you know I am your friend, for you look on a part that a Pawnee never yet saw. Now look at my face; not in this seam, for there your eyes can never see into my spirit. It is a hole cut by a Konza. But here is an opening made by the Wahcondah, through which you may look into the soul. What am I? A Dahcotah, within and without. You know it. Therefore hear me. The blood of every creature on the prairie is red. Who can tell the spot where a Pawnee was struck, from the place where my young men took a bison? It is of the same colour. The Master of Life made them for each other. He made them alike. But will the grass grow green where a Pale-face is killed? My young men must not think that nation so numerous, that it will not miss a warrior. They call them over often, and say, Where are my sons? If they miss one, they will send into the prairies to look for him. If they cannot find him, they will tell their runners to ask for him, among the Siouxes. My brethren, the Big-knives are not fools. There is a mighty medicine of their nation now among us; who can tell how loud is his voice, or how long is his arm?—”

The speech of the orator, who was beginning to enter into his subject with warmth, was cut short by the impatient Mahtoree, who suddenly arose and exclaimed, in a voice in which authority was mingled with contempt, and at the close with a keen tone of irony, also—

“Let my young men lead the evil spirit of the Palefaces to the council. My brother shall see his medicine, face to face!”

A death-like and solemn stillness succeeded this extraordinary interruption. It not only involved a deep offence against the sacred courtesy of debate, but the mandate was likely to brave the unknown power of one of those incomprehensible beings, whom few Indians were enlightened enough, at that day, to regard without reverence, or few hardy enough to oppose. The subordinates, however, obeyed, and Obed was led forth from the lodge, mounted on Asinus, with a ceremony and state which was certainly intended for derision, but which nevertheless was greatly enhanced by fear. As they entered the ring, Mahtoree, who had foreseen and had endeavoured to anticipate the influence of the Doctor, by bringing him into contempt, cast an eye around the assembly, in order to gather his success in the various dark visages by which he was encircled.

Truly, nature and art had combined to produce such an effect from the air and appointments of the naturalist, as might have made him the subject of wonder in any place. His head had been industriously shaved, after the most approved fashion of Sioux taste. A gallant scalp-lock, which would probably not have been spared had the Doctor himself been consulted in the matter, was all that remained of an exuberant, and at that particular season of the year, far from uncomfortable head of hair. Thick coats of paint had been laid on the naked poll, and certain fanciful designs, in the same material, had even been extended into the neighbourhood of the eyes and mouth, lending to the keen expression of the former a look of twinkling cunning, and to the dogmatism of the latter, not a little of the grimness of necromancy. He had been despoiled of his upper garments, and, in their stead, his body was sufficiently protected from the cold, by a fantastically painted robe of dressed deer-skin. As if in mockery of his pursuit, sundry toads, frogs, lizards, butterflies, &c., all duly prepared to take their places at some future day, in his own private cabinet, were attached to the solitary lock on his head, to his ears, and to various other conspicuous parts of his person. If, in addition to the effect produced by these quaint auxiliaries to his costume, we add the portentous and troubled gleamings of doubt, which rendered his visage doubly austere, and proclaimed the misgivings of the worthy Obed's mind, as he beheld his personal dignity thus prostrated, and what was of far greater moment in his eyes, himself led forth, as he firmly believed, to be the victim of some heathenish sacrifice, the reader will find no difficulty in giving credit to the sensation of awe, that was excited by his appearance in a band already more than half-prepared to worship him, as a powerful agent of the evil spirit.

Weucha led Asinus directly into the centre of the circle, and leaving them together, (for the legs of the naturalist were attached to the beast in such a manner, that the two animals might be said to be incorporated, and to form a new order,) he withdrew to his proper place, gazing at the conjuror, as he retired, with a wonder and admiration, that were natural to the groveling dulness of his mind.

The astonishment seemed mutual, between the spectators and the subject of this strange exhibition. If the Tetons contemplated the mysterious attributes of the medicine, with awe and fear, the Doctor gazed on every side of him, with a mixture of quite as many extraordinary emotions, in which the latter sensation, however, formed no inconsiderable ingredient. Every where his eyes, which just at that moment possessed a secret magnifying quality, seemed to rest on several dark, savage, and obdurate countenances at once, from none of which could he extract a solitary gleam of sympathy or commiseration. At length his wandering gaze fell on the grave and decent features of the trapper, who, with Hector at his feet, stood in the edge of the circle, leaning on that rifle which he had been permitted, as an acknowledged friend, to resume, and apparently musing on the events that were likely to succeed a council, marked by so many and such striking ceremonies.

“Venerable venator, or hunter, or trapper,” said the disconsolate Obed, “I rejoice greatly in meeting thee again. I fear that the precious time, which had been allotted me, in order to complete a mighty labour, is drawing to a premature close, and I would gladly unburden my mind to one who, if not a pupil of science, has at least some of the knowledge which civilisation imparts to its meanest subjects. Doubtless many and earnest enquiries will be made after my fate, by the learned societies of the world, and perhaps expeditions will be sent into these regions to remove any doubts, which may arise on so important a subject. I esteem myself happy that a man, who speaks the vernacular, is present, to preserve the record of my end. You will say that after a well-spent and glorious life, I died a martyr to science, and a victim to mental darkness. As I expect to be particularly calm and abstracted in my last moments, if you add a few details, concerning the fortitude and scholastic dignity with which I met my death, it may serve to encourage future aspirants for similar honours, and assuredly give offence to no one. And now, friend trapper, as a duty I owe to human nature, I will conclude by demanding if all hope has deserted me, or if any means still exist by which so much valuable information may be rescued from the grasp of ignorance, and preserved to the pages of natural history.”

The old man lent an attentive ear to this melancholy appeal, and apparently he reflected on every side of the important question, before he would presume to answer.

“I take it, friend physicianer,” he at length gravely replied, “that the chances of life and death, in your particular case, depend altogether on the will of Providence, as it may be pleased to manifest it, through the accursed windings of Indian cunning. For my own part, I see no great difference in the main end to be gained, inasmuch as it can matter no one greatly, yourself excepted, whether you live or die.”

“Would you account the fall of a corner-stone, from the foundations of the edifice of learning, a matter of indifference to contemporaries or to posterity?” interrupted Obed. “Besides, my aged associate,” he reproachfully added, “the interest, that a man has in his own existence, is by no means trifling, however it may be eclipsed by his devotion to more general and philanthropic feelings.”

“What I would say is this,” resumed the trapper, who was far from understanding all the subtle distinctions with which his more learned companion so often saw fit to embellish his discourse; “there is but one birth and one death to all things, be it hound, or be it deer; be it red skin, or be it white. Both are in the hands of the Lord, it being as unlawful for man to strive to hasten the one, as impossible to prevent the other. But I will not say that something may not be done to put the last moment aside, for a while at least, and therefore it is a question, that any one has a right to put to his own wisdom, how far he will go, and how much pain he will suffer, to



lengthen out a time that may have been too long already. Many a dreary winter and scorching summer has gone by since I have turned, to the right hand or to the left, to add an hour to a life that has already stretched beyond fourscore years. I keep myself as ready to answer to my name as a soldier at evening roll-call. In my judgment, if your cases are left to Indian tempers, the policy of the Great Sioux will lead his people to sacrifice you all; nor do I put much dependence on his seeming love for me; therefore it becomes a question whether you are ready for such a journey; and if, being ready, whether this is not as good a time to start as another. Should my opinion be asked, thus far will I give it in your favour; that is to say, it is my belief your life has been innocent enough, touching any great offences that you may have committed, though honesty compels me to add, that I think all you can lay claim to, on the score of activity in deeds, will not amount to any thing worth naming in the great account."

Obed turned a rueful eye on the calm, philosophic countenance of the other, as he answered with so discouraging a statement of his case, clearing his throat, as he did so, in order to conceal the desperate concern which began to beset his faculties, with a vestige of that pride, which rarely deserts poor human nature, even in the greatest emergencies.

"I believe, venerable hunter," he replied, "considering the question in all its bearings, and assuming that your theory is just, it will be the safest to conclude that I am not prepared to make so hasty a departure, and that measures of precaution should be, forthwith, resorted to."

"Being in that mind," returned the deliberate trapper, "I will act for you as I would for myself; though as time has begun to roll down the hill with you, I will just advise that you look to your case speedily, for it may so happen that your name will be heard, when quite as little prepared to answer to it as now."

With this amicable understanding, the old man drew back again into the ring, where he stood musing on the course he should now adopt, with the singular mixture of decision and resignation that proceeded from his habits and his humility, and which united to form a character, in which excessive energy, and the most meek submission to the will of Providence, were oddly enough combined.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

The witch, in Smithfield, shall be burned to ashes, And you three  
shall be strangled on the gallows.

—Shakspeare.

The Siouzes had awaited the issue of the foregoing dialogue with commendable patience. Most of the band were restrained, by the secret awe with which they regarded the mysterious character of Obed; while a few of the more intelligent chiefs gladly profited by the opportunity, to arrange their thoughts for the struggle that was plainly foreseen. Mahtoree, influenced by neither of these feelings, was content to show the trapper how much he conceded to his pleasure; and when the old man discontinued the discourse, he received from the chief a glance, that was intended to remind him of the patience, with which he had awaited his movements. A profound and motionless silence succeeded the short interruption. Then Mahtoree arose, evidently prepared to speak. First placing himself in an attitude of dignity, he turned a steady and severe look on the whole assembly. The expression of his eye, however, changed as it glanced across the different countenances of his supporters and of his opponents. To the former the look, though stern, was not threatening, while it seemed to tell the latter all the hazards they incurred, in daring to brave the resentment of one so powerful.

Still, in the midst of so much hauteur and confidence, the sagacity and cunning of the Teton did not desert him. When he had thrown the gauntlet, as it were, to the whole tribe, and sufficiently asserted his claim to superiority, his mien became more affable and his eye less angry. Then it was that he raised his voice, in the midst of a death-like stillness, varying its tones to suit the changing character of his images, and of his eloquence.

“What is a Sioux?” the chief sagaciously began; “he is ruler of the prairies, and master of its beasts. The fishes in the ‘river of troubled waters’ know him, and come at his call. He is a fox in counsel; an eagle in sight; a grizzly bear in combat. A Dahcotah is a man!” After waiting for the low murmur of approbation, which followed this flattering portrait of his people, to subside, the Teton continued—“What is a Pawnee? A thief, who only steals from women; a Red-skin, who is not brave; a hunter, that begs for his venison. In counsel he is a squirrel, hopping from place to place; he is an owl, that goes on the prairies at night; in battle he is an elk, whose legs are long. A Pawnee is a woman.” Another pause succeeded, during which a yell of delight broke from several mouths, and a demand was made, that the taunting words should be translated to the unconscious subject of their biting contempt. The old man took his cue from the eyes of Mahtoree, and complied. Hard-Heart listened gravely, and then, as if apprized that his time to speak had not arrived, he once more bent his look on the vacant air. The orator watched his countenance, with an expression that manifested how inextinguishable was the hatred he felt for the only chief, far and near, whose fame might advantageously be compared with his own. Though disappointed in not having touched the pride of one whom he regarded as a boy, he proceeded, what he considered as far more important, to quicken the tempers of the men of his own tribe, in order that they might be prepared to work his savage purposes. “If the earth was covered with rats, which are good for nothing,” he said, “there would be no room for buffaloes, which give food and clothes to an Indian. If the prairies were covered with Pawnees, there would be no room for the foot of a Dahcotah. A Loup is a rat, a Sioux a heavy buffalo; let the buffaloes tread upon the rats and make room for themselves.

“My brothers, a little child has spoken to you. He tells you, his hair is not grey, but frozen—that the grass will not grow where a Pale-face has died. Does he know the colour of the blood of a Big-knife? No! I know he does not; he has never seen it. What Dahcotah, besides Mahtoree, has ever struck a Pale-face? Not one. But Mahtoree must be silent. Every Teton will shut his ears when he speaks. The scalps over his lodge were taken by the women. They were taken by Mahtoree, and he is a woman. His mouth is shut; he waits for the feasts to sing among the girls!”

Notwithstanding the exclamations of regret and resentment, which followed so abasing a declaration, the chief took his seat, as if determined to speak no more. But the murmurs grew louder and more general, and there were threatening symptoms that the council would dissolve itself in confusion; and he arose and resumed his speech, by changing his manner to the fierce and hurried enunciation of a warrior bent on revenge.

“Let my young men go look for Tetao!” he cried; “they will find his scalp drying in Pawnee smoke. Where is the son of Bohrecheena? His bones are whiter than the faces of his murderers. Is Mahhah asleep in his lodge? You know it is many moons since he started for the blessed prairies; would he were here, that he might say of what colour was the hand that took his scalp!”

In this strain the artful chief continued for many minutes, calling those warriors by name, who were known to have met their deaths in battle with the Pawnees, or in some of those lawless frays which so often occurred between the Sioux bands and a class of white men, who were but little removed from them in the qualities of civilisation. Time was not given to reflect on the merits, or rather the demerits, of most of the different individuals to whom he alluded, in consequence of the rapid manner in which he ran over their names; but so cunningly did he time his events, and so thrillingly did he make his appeals, aided as they were by the power of his deep-toned and stirring voice, that each of them struck an answering chord in the breast of some one of his auditors.

It was in the midst of one of his highest flights of eloquence, that a man, so aged as to walk with the greatest difficulty, entered the very centre of the circle, and took his stand directly in front of the speaker. An ear of great acuteness might possibly have detected that the tones of the orator faltered a little, as his flashing look first fell on this unexpected object, though the change was so trifling, that none, but such as thoroughly knew the parties, would have suspected it. The stranger had once been as distinguished for his beauty and proportions, as had been his eagle eye for its irresistible and terrible glance. But his skin was now wrinkled, and his features furrowed with so many scars, as to have obtained for him, half a century before, from the French of the Canadas, a title which has been borne by so many of the heroes of France, and which had now been adopted into the language of the wild horde of whom we are writing, as the one most expressive of the deeds of their own brave. The murmur of *Le Balafre*, that ran through the assembly when he appeared,

announced not only his name and the high estimation of his character, but how extraordinary his visit was considered. As he neither spoke nor moved, however, the sensation created by his appearance soon subsided, and then every eye was again turned upon the speaker, and every ear once more drunk in the intoxication of his maddening appeals.

It would have been easy to have traced the triumph of Mahtoree, in the reflecting countenances of his auditors. It was not long before a look of ferocity and of revenge was to be seen seated on the grim visages of most of the warriors, and each new and crafty allusion to the policy of extinguishing their enemies, was followed by fresh and less restrained bursts of approbation. In the height of this success the Teton closed his speech, by a rapid appeal to the pride and hardihood of his native band, and suddenly took his seat.

In the midst of the murmurs of applause, which succeeded so remarkable an effort of eloquence, a low, feeble and hollow voice was heard rising on the ear, as if it rolled from the inmost cavities of the human chest, and gathered strength and energy as it issued into the air. A solemn stillness followed the sounds, and then the lips of the aged man were first seen to move.

"The day of Le Balafre is near its end," were the first words that were distinctly audible. "He is like a buffalo, on whom the hair will grow no longer. He will soon be ready to leave his lodge, to go in search of another, that is far from the villages of the Siouzes; therefore, what he has to say concerns not him, but those he leaves behind him. His words are like the fruit on the tree, ripe and fit to be given to chiefs.

"Many snows have fallen since Le Balafre has been found on the war-path. His blood has been very hot, but it has had time to cool. The Wahcondah gives him dreams of war no longer; he sees that it is better to live in peace.

"My brothers, one foot is turned to the happy hunting-grounds, the other will soon follow, and then an old chief will be seen looking for the prints of his father's moccasins, that he may make no mistake, but be sure to come before the Master of Life, by the same path, as so many good Indians have already travelled. But who will follow? Le Balafre has no son. His oldest has ridden too many Pawnee horses; the bones of the youngest have been gnawed by Konza dogs! Le Balafre has come to look for a young arm, on which he may lean, and to find a son, that when he is gone his lodge may not be empty. Tachechana, the skipping fawn of the Tetons, is too weak, to prop a warrior, who is old. She looks before her and not backwards. Her mind is in the lodge of her husband."

The enunciation of the veteran warrior had been calm, but distinct, and decided. His declaration was received in silence; and though several of the chiefs, who were in the counsels of Mahtoree, turned their eyes on their leader, none presumed to oppose so aged and so venerated a brave, in a resolution that was strictly in conformity to the usages of the nation. The Teton himself was content to await the result with seeming composure, though the gleams of ferocity, that played about his eye, occasionally betrayed the nature of those feelings, with which he witnessed a procedure, that was likely to rob him of that one of all his intended victims whom he most hated.

In the mean time Le Balafre moved with a slow and painful step towards the captives. He stopped before the person of Hard-Heart, whose faultless form, unchanging eye, and lofty mien, he contemplated long, with high and evident satisfaction. Then making a gesture of authority, he awaited, until his order had been obeyed, and the youth was released from the post and his bonds, by the same blow of the knife. When the young warrior was led nearer to his dimmed and failing sight, the examination was renewed, with strictness of scrutiny, and that admiration, which physical excellence is so apt to excite in the breast of a savage.

"It is good," the wary veteran murmured, when he found that all his skill in the requisites of a brave could detect no blemish; "this is a leaping panther! Does my son speak with the tongue of a Teton?"

The intelligence, which lighted the eyes of the captive, betrayed how well he understood the question, but still he was far too haughty to communicate his ideas through the medium of a language that belonged to a hostile people. Some of the surrounding warriors explained to the old chief, that the captive was a Pawnee-Loup.

"My son opened his eyes on the 'waters of the wolves,'" said Le Balafre, in the language of that nation, "but he will shut them in the bend of the 'river with a troubled stream.' He was born a Pawnee, but he will die a Dahcotah. Look at me. I am a sycamore, that once covered many with my shadow. The leaves are fallen, and the branches begin to drop. But a single sucker is springing from my roots; it is a little vine, and it winds itself about a tree that is green. I have long looked for one fit to grow by my side. Now have I found him. Le Balafre is no longer without a son; his name will not be forgotten when he is gone! Men of the Tetons, I take this youth into my lodge."

No one was bold enough to dispute a right, that had so often been exercised by warriors far inferior to the present speaker, and the adoption was listened to, in grave and respectful silence. Le Balafre took his intended son by the arm, and leading him into the very centre of the circle, he stepped aside with an air of triumph, in order that the spectators might approve of his choice. Mahtoree betrayed no evidence of his intentions, but rather seemed to await a moment better suited to the crafty policy of his character. The more experienced and sagacious chiefs distinctly foresaw the utter impossibility of two partisans so renowned, so hostile, and who had so long been rivals in fame, as their prisoner and their native leader, existing amicably in the same tribe. Still the character of Le Balafre was so imposing, and the custom to which he had resorted so sacred, that none dared to lift a voice in opposition to the measure. They watched the result with increasing interest, but with a coldness of demeanour that concealed the nature of their inquietude. From this state of embarrassment, and as it might readily have proved of disorganisation, the tribe was unexpectedly relieved by the decision of the one most interested in the success of the aged chief's designs.

During the whole of the foregoing scene, it would have been difficult to have traced a single distinct emotion in the lineaments of the captive. He had heard his release proclaimed, with the same indifference as the order to bind him to the stake. But now, that the moment had arrived when it became necessary to make his election, he spoke in a way to prove that the fortitude, which had bought him so distinguished a name, had in no degree deserted him.

"My father is very old, but he has not yet looked upon every thing," said Hard-Heart, in a voice so clear as to be heard by all in presence. "He has never seen a buffalo change to a bat. He will never see a Pawnee become a Sioux!"

There was a suddenness, and yet a calmness in the manner of delivering this decision, which assured most of the auditors that it was unalterable. The heart of Le Balafre, however, was yearning towards the youth, and the fondness of age was not so readily repulsed.

Reproving the burst of admiration and triumph, to which the boldness of the declaration, and the freshened hopes of revenge had given rise, by turning his gleaming eye around the band, the veteran again addressed his adopted child, as if his purpose was not to be denied.

"It is well," he said; "such are the words a brave should use, that the warriors may see his heart. The day has been when the voice of Le Balafre was loudest among the lodges of the Konzas. But the root of a white hair is wisdom. My child will show the Tetons that he is brave, by striking their enemies. Men of the Dahcotahs, this is my son!"

The Pawnee hesitated a moment, and then stepping in front of the chief, he took his hard and wrinkled hand, and laid it with reverence on his head, as if to acknowledge the extent of his obligation. Then recoiling a step, he raised his person to its greatest elevation, and looked upon the hostile band, by whom he was environed, with an air of loftiness and disdain, as he spoke aloud, in the language of the Siouxes—

"Hard-Heart has looked at himself, within and without. He has thought of all he has done in the hunts and in the wars. Every where he is the same. There is no change. He is in all things a Pawnee. He has struck so many Tetons that he could never eat in their lodges. His arrows would fly backwards; the point of his lance would be on the wrong end; their friends would weep at every whoop he gave; their enemies would laugh. Do the Tetons know a Loup? Let them look at him again. His head is painted; his arm is flesh; his heart is rock. When the Tetons see the sun come from the Rocky Mountains, and move towards the land of the Pale-faces, the mind of Hard-Heart will soften, and his spirit will become Sioux. Until that day, he will live and die a Pawnee."

A yell of delight, in which admiration and ferocity were strangely mingled, interrupted the speaker, and but too clearly announced the character of his fate. The captive awaited a moment, for the commotion to subside, and then turning again to Le Balafre, he continued, in tones conciliating and kind, as if he felt the propriety of softening his refusal, in a manner not to wound the pride of one who would so gladly be his benefactor—

"Let my father lean heavier on the fawn of the Dahcotahs," he said; "she is weak now, but as her lodge fills with young, she will be stronger. See," he added, directing the eyes of the other to the earnest countenance of the attentive trapper; "Hard-Heart is not without a grey-head to show him the path to the blessed prairies. If he ever has another father, it shall be that just warrior."

Le Balafre turned away in disappointment from the youth, and approached the stranger, who had thus anticipated his design. The examination between these two aged men was long, mutual, and curious. It was not easy to detect the real character of the trapper, through the mask which the hardships of so many years had laid upon his features, especially when aided by his wild and peculiar attire. Some moments elapsed before the Teton spoke, and then it was in doubt whether he addressed one like himself, or some wanderer of that race who, he had heard, were spreading themselves, like hungry locusts, throughout the land.

"The head of my brother is very white," he said; "but the eye of Le Balafre is no longer like the eagle's. Of what colour is his skin?"

"The Wahcondah made me like these you see waiting for a Dahcotah judgment; but fair and foul has coloured me darker than the skin of a fox. What of that! Though the bark is ragged and riven, the heart of the tree is sound."

"My brother is a Big-knife! Let him turn his face towards the setting sun, and open his eyes. Does he see the salt lake beyond the mountains?"

"The time has been, Teton, when few could see the white on the eagle's head farther than I; but the glare of fourscore and seven winters has dimmed my eyes, and but little can I boast of sight in my latter days. Does the Sioux think a Pale-face is a god, that he can look through hills?"

"Then let my brother look at me. I am nigh him, and he can see that I am a foolish Red-man. Why cannot his people see every thing, since they crave all?"

"I understand you, chief; nor will I gainsay the justice of your words, seeing that they are too much founded in truth. But though born of the race you love so little, my worst enemy, not even a lying Mingo, would dare to say that I ever laid hands on the goods of another, except such as were taken in manful warfare; or that I ever coveted more ground than the Lord has intended each man to fill."

"And yet my brother has come among the Red-skins to find a son?"

The trapper laid a finger on the naked shoulder of Le Balafre, and looked into his scarred countenance with a wistful and confidential expression, as he answered—

"Ay; but it was only that I might do good to the boy. If you think, Dahcotah, that I adopted the youth in order to prop my age, you do as much injustice to my goodwill, as you seem to know little of the merciless intentions of your own people. I have made him my son, that he may know that one is left behind him. Peace, Hector, peace! Is this decent, pup, when greyheads are counselling together, to break in upon their discourse with the whinings of a hound! The dog is old, Teton; and though well taught in respect of behaviour, he is getting, like ourselves, I fancy, something forgetful of the fashions of his youth."

Further discourse, between these veterans, was interrupted by a discordant yell, which burst at that moment from the lips of the dozen withered crones, who have already been mentioned as having forced themselves into a conspicuous part of the circle. The outcry was excited by a sudden change in the air of Hard-Heart. When the old men turned towards the youth, they saw him standing in the very centre of the ring, with his head erect, his eye fixed on vacancy, one leg advanced and an arm a little raised, as if all his faculties were absorbed in the act of listening. A smile lighted his countenance, for a single moment, and then the whole man sunk again into his former look of dignity and coldness, suddenly recalled to self-possession. The movement had been construed into contempt, and even the tempers of the chiefs began to be excited. Unable to restrain their fury, the women broke into the circle in a body, and commenced their attack by loading the captive with the most bitter revilings. They boasted of the various exploits, which their sons had achieved at the expense of the different tribes of the Pawnees. They undervalued his own reputation, and told him to look at Mahtoree, if he had never yet seen a warrior. They accused him of having been suckled by a doe, and of having drunk in cowardice with his mother's milk. In short, they lavished upon their unmoved captive a torrent of that vindictive abuse, in which the women of the savages are so well known to excel, but which has been too often described to need a repetition here.

The effect of this outbreaking was inevitable. Le Balafre turned away disappointed, and hid himself in the crowd, while the trapper, whose honest features were working with inward emotion, pressed nigher to his young friend, as those who are linked to the criminal, by ties so strong as to brave the opinions of men, are often seen to stand about the place of execution to support his dying moments. The excitement soon spread among the inferior warriors, though the chiefs still forbore to make the signal, which committed the victim to their mercy. Mahtoree, who had awaited such a movement among his fellows, with the wary design of concealing his own jealous hatred, soon grew weary of delay, and, by a glance of his eye, encouraged the tormentors to proceed.

Weucha, who, eager for this sanction, had long stood watching the countenance of the chief, bounded forward at the signal like a blood-hound loosened from the leash. Forcing his way into the centre of the hags, who were already proceeding from abuse to violence, he reproved their impatience, and bade them wait, until a warrior had begun to torment, and then they should see their victim shed tears like a woman.

The heartless savage commenced his efforts, by flourishing his tomahawk about the head of the captive, in such a manner as to give reason to suppose, that each blow would bury the weapon in the flesh, while it was so governed as not to touch the skin. To this customary expedient Hard-Heart was perfectly insensible. His eye kept the same steady, riveted look on the air, though the glittering axe described, in its evolutions, a bright circle of light before his countenance. Frustrated in this attempt, the callous Sioux laid the cold edge on the naked head of his victim, and began to describe the different manners, in which a prisoner might be flayed. The women kept time to his cruelties with their taunts, and endeavoured to force some expression of the lingerings of nature from the insensible features of the Pawnee. But he evidently reserved himself for the chiefs, and for those moments of extreme anguish, when the loftiness of his spirit might evince itself in a manner better becoming his high and untarnished reputation.

The eyes of the trapper, followed every movement of the tomahawk, with the interest of a real father, until at length, unable to command his indignation, he exclaimed—

“My son has forgotten his cunning. This is a low-minded Indian, and one easily hurried into folly. I cannot do the thing myself, for my traditions forbid a dying warrior to revile his persecutors, but the gifts of a Red-skin are different. Let the Pawnee say the bitter words and purchase an easy death. I will answer for his success, provided he speaks before the grave men set their wisdom to back the folly of this fool.”

The savage Sioux, who heard his words without comprehending their meaning, turned to the speaker and menaced him with death, for his temerity.

“Ay, work your will,” said the unflinching old man; “I am as ready now as I shall be to-morrow. Though it would be a death that an honest man might not wish to die. Look at that noble Pawnee, Teton, and see what a Red-skin may become, who fears the Master of Life, and follows his laws. How many of your people has he sent to the distant prairies?” he continued in a sort of pious fraud, thinking, that while the danger menaced himself, there could surely be no sin in extolling the merits of another; “how many howling Siouxes has he struck, like a warrior in open combat, while arrows were sailing in the air plentier than flakes of falling snow! Go! will Weucha speak the name of one enemy he has ever struck?”

“Hard-Heart!” shouted the Sioux, turning in his fury, and aiming a deadly blow at the head of his victim. His arm fell into the hollow of the captive's hand. For a single moment the two stood, as if entranced in that attitude, the one paralysed by so unexpected a resistance, and the other bending his head, not to meet his death, but in the act of the most intense attention. The women screamed with triumph, for they thought the nerves of the captive had at length failed him. The trapper trembled for the honour of his friend; and Hector, as if conscious of what was passing, raised his nose into the air, and uttered a piteous howl.

But the Pawnee hesitated, only for that moment. Raising the other hand, like lightning, the tomahawk flashed in the air, and Weucha sunk to his feet, brained to the eye. Then cutting a way with the bloody weapon, he darted through the opening, left by the frightened women, and seemed to descend the declivity at a single bound.

Had a bolt from Heaven fallen in the midst of the Teton band it would not have occasioned greater consternation, than this act of desperate hardihood. A shrill plaintive cry burst from the lips of all the women, and there was a moment, that even the oldest warriors appeared to have lost their faculties. This stupor endured only for the instant. It was succeeded by a yell of revenge, that burst from a hundred throats, while as many warriors started forward at the cry, bent on the most bloody retribution. But a powerful and authoritative call from Mahtoree arrested every foot. The chief, in whose countenance disappointment and rage were struggling with the affected composure of his station, extended an arm towards the river, and the whole mystery was explained.

Hard-Heart had already crossed half the bottom, which lay between the acclivity and the water. At this precise moment a band of armed and mounted Pawnees turned a swell, and galloped to the margin of the stream, into which the plunge of the fugitive was distinctly heard. A few minutes sufficed for his vigorous arm to conquer the passage, and then the shout from the opposite shore told the humbled Tetons the whole extent of the triumph of their adversaries.

## CHAPTER XXIX

If that shepherd be not in hand-fast, let him fly; the curses he shall have, the tortures he shall feel, will break the back of man, the heart of monster.

—Shakspeare.

It will readily be seen that the event just related was attended by an extraordinary sensation among the Siouzes. In leading the hunters of the band back to the encampment, their chief had neglected none of the customary precautions of Indian prudence, in order that his trail might escape the eyes of his enemies. It would seem, however, that the Pawnees had not only made the dangerous discovery, but had managed with great art to draw nigh the place, by the only side on which it was thought unnecessary to guard the approaches with the usual line of sentinels. The latter, who were scattered along the different little eminences, which lay in the rear of the lodges, were among the last to be apprized of the danger.

In such a crisis there was little time for deliberation. It was by exhibiting the force of his character in scenes of similar difficulty, that Mahtoree had obtained and strengthened his ascendancy among his people, nor did he seem likely to lose it by the manifestation of any indecision on the present occasion. In the midst of the screams of the young, the shrieks of the women, and the wild howlings of the crones, which were sufficient of themselves to have created a chaos in the thoughts of one less accustomed to act in emergencies, he promptly asserted his authority, issuing his orders with the coolness of a veteran.

While the warriors were arming, the boys were despatched to the bottom for the horses. The tents were hastily struck by the women, and disposed of on such of the beasts as were not deemed fit to be trusted in combat. The infants were cast upon the backs of their mothers, and those children, who were of a size to march, were driven to the rear, like a herd of less reasoning animals. Though these several movements were made amid outcries, and a clamour, that likened the place to another Babel, they were executed with incredible alacrity and intelligence.

In the mean time, Mahtoree neglected no duty that belonged to his responsible station. From the elevation, on which he stood, he could command a perfect view of the force and evolutions of the hostile party. A grim smile lighted his visage, when he found that, in point of numbers, his own band was greatly the superior. Notwithstanding this advantage, however, there were other points of inequality, which would probably have a tendency to render his success, in the approaching conflict, exceedingly doubtful. His people were the inhabitants of a more northern and less hospitable region than their enemies, and were far from being rich in that species of property, horses and arms, which constitutes the most highly prized wealth of a western Indian. The band in view was mounted to a man; and as it had come so far to rescue, or to revenge, their greatest partisan, he had no reason to doubt its being composed entirely of braves. On the other hand, many of his followers were far better in a hunt than in a combat; men who might serve to divert the attention of his foes, but from whom he could expect little desperate service. Still, his flashing eye glanced over a body of warriors on whom he had often relied, and who had never deceived him; and though, in the precise position in which he found himself, he felt no disposition to precipitate the conflict, he certainly would have had no intention to avoid it, had not the presence of his women and children placed the option altogether in the power of his adversaries.

On the other hand, the Pawnees, so unexpectedly successful in their first and greatest object, manifested no intention to drive matters to an issue. The river was a dangerous barrier to pass, in the face of a determined foe, and it would now have been in perfect accordance with their cautious policy, to have retired for a season, in order that their onset might be made in the hours of darkness, and of seeming security. But there was a spirit in their chief that elevated him, for the moment, above the ordinary expedients of savage warfare. His bosom burned with the desire to wipe out that disgrace of which he had been the subject; and it is possible, that he believed the retiring camp of the Siouzes contained a prize, that began to have a value in his eyes, far exceeding any that could be found in fifty Teton scalps. Let that be as it might, Hard-Heart had no sooner received the brief congratulations of his band, and communicated to the chiefs such facts as were important to be known, than he prepared himself to act such a part in the coming conflict, as would at once maintain his well-earned reputation, and gratify his secret wishes. A led horse, one that had been long trained in the hunts, had been brought to receive his master, with but little hope that his services would ever be needed again in this life. With a delicacy and consideration, that proved how much the generous qualities of the youth had touched the feelings of his people, a bow, a lance, and a quiver, were thrown across the animal, which it had been intended to immolate on the grave of the young brave; a species of care that would have superseded the necessity for the pious duty that the trapper had pledged himself to perform.

Though Hard-Heart was sensible of the kindness of his warriors, and believed that a chief, furnished with such appointments, might depart with credit for the distant hunting-grounds of the Master of Life, he seemed equally disposed to think that they might be rendered quite as useful, in the actual state of things. His countenance lighted with stern pleasure, as he tried the elasticity of the bow, and poised the well-balanced spear. The glance he bestowed on the shield was more cursory and indifferent; but the exultation with which he threw himself on the back of his favoured war-horse was so great, as to break through the forms of Indian reserve. He rode to and fro among his scarcely less delighted warriors, managing the animal with a grace and address that no artificial rules can ever supply; at times flourishing his lance, as if to assure himself of his seat, and at others examining critically into the condition of the fusee, with which he had also been furnished, with the fondness of one, who was miraculously restored to the possession of treasures, that constituted his pride and his happiness.

At this particular moment Mahtoree, having completed the necessary arrangements, prepared to make a more decisive movement. The Teton had found no little embarrassment in disposing of his captives. The tents of the squatter were still in sight, and his wary cunning did not fail to apprise him, that it was quite as necessary to guard against an attack from that quarter as to watch the motions of his more open and more active foes. His first impulse had been to make the tomahawk suffice for the men, and to trust the females

under the same protection as the women of his band; but the manner, in which many of his braves continued to regard the imaginary medicine of the Long-knives, forewarned him of the danger of so hazardous an experiment on the eve of a battle. It might be deemed the omen of defeat. In this dilemma he motioned to a superannuated warrior, to whom he had confided the charge of the non-combatants, and leading him apart, he placed a finger significantly on his shoulder, as he said, in a tone, in which authority was tempered by confidence—

“When my young men are striking the Pawnees, give the women knives. Enough; my father is very old; he does not want to hear wisdom from a boy.”

The grim old savage returned a look of ferocious assent, and then the mind of the chief appeared to be at rest on this important subject. From that moment he bestowed all his care on the achievement of his revenge, and the maintenance of his martial character. Throwing himself on his horse, he made a sign, with the air of a prince to his followers, to imitate his example, interrupting, without ceremony, the war songs and solemn rites by which many among them were stimulating their spirits to deeds of daring. When all were in order, the whole moved with great steadiness and silence towards the margin of the river.

The hostile bands were now separated by the water. The width of the stream was too great to admit of the use of the ordinary Indian missiles, but a few useless shots were exchanged from the fuses of the chiefs, more in bravado than with any expectation of doing execution. As some time was suffered to elapse, in demonstrations and abortive efforts, we shall leave them, for that period, to return to such of our characters as remained in the hands of the savages.

We have shed much ink in vain, and wasted quires, that might possibly have been better employed, if it be necessary now to tell the reader that few of the foregoing movements escaped the observation of the experienced trapper. He had been, in common with the rest, astonished at the sudden act of Hard-Heart; and there was a single moment when a feeling of regret and mortification got the better of his longings to save the life of the youth. The simple and well-intentioned old man would have felt, at witnessing any failure of firmness on the part of a warrior, who had so strongly excited his sympathies, the same species of sorrow that a Christian parent would suffer in hanging over the dying moments of an impious child. But when, instead of an impotent and unmanly struggle for existence, he found that his friend had forborne, with the customary and dignified submission of an Indian warrior, until an opportunity had offered to escape, and that he had then manifested the spirit and decision of the most gifted brave, his gratification became nearly too powerful to be concealed. In the midst of the wailing and commotion, which succeeded the death of Weucha and the escape of the captive, he placed himself nigh the persons of his white associates, with a determination of interfering, at every hazard, should the fury of the savages take that direction. The appearance of the hostile band spared him, however, so desperate and probably so fruitless an effort, and left him to pursue his observations, and to mature his plans more at leisure.

He particularly remarked that, while by far the greater part of the women, and all the children, together with the effects of the party, were hurried to the rear, probably with an order to secrete themselves in some of the adjacent woods, the tent of Mahtoree himself was left standing, and its contents undisturbed. Two chosen horses, however, stood near by, held by a couple of youths, who were too young to go into the conflict, and yet of an age to understand the management of the beasts. The trapper perceived in this arrangement the reluctance of Mahtoree to trust his newly-found flowers beyond the reach of his eye; and, at the same time, his forethought in providing against a reverse of fortune. Neither had the manner of the Teton, in giving his commission to the old savage, nor the fierce pleasure with which the latter had received the bloody charge, escaped his observation. From all these mysterious movements, the old man was aware that a crisis was at hand, and he summoned the utmost knowledge he had acquired, in so long a life, to aid him in the desperate conjuncture. While musing on the means to be employed, the Doctor again attracted his attention to himself, by a piteous appeal for assistance.

“Venerable trapper, or, as I may now say, liberator,” commenced the dolorous Obed, “it would seem, that a fitting time has at length arrived to dis sever the unnatural and altogether irregular connection, which exists between my inferior members and the body of Asinus. Perhaps if such a portion of my limbs were released as might leave me master of the remainder, and this favourable opportunity were suitably improved, by making a forced march towards the settlements, all hopes of preserving the treasures of knowledge, of which I am the unworthy receptacle, would not be lost. The importance of the results is surely worth the hazard of the experiment.”

“I know not, I know not,” returned the deliberate old man; “the vermin and reptiles, which you bear about you, were intended by the Lord for the prairies, and I see no good in sending them into regions that may not suit their nature’s. And, moreover, you may be of great and particular use as you now sit on the ass, though it creates no wonder in my mind to perceive that you are ignorant of it, seeing that usefulness is altogether a new calling to so bookish a man.”

“Of what service can I be in this painful thralldom, in which the animal functions are in a manner suspended, and the spiritual, or intellectual, blinded by the secret sympathy that unites mind to matter? There is likely to be blood spilt between yonder adverse hosts of heathens; and, though but little desiring the office, it would be better that I should employ myself in surgical experiments, than in thus wasting the precious moments, mortifying both soul and body.”

“It is little that a Red-skin would care to have a physician at his hurts, while the whoop is ringing in his ears. Patience is a virtue in an Indian, and can be no shame to a Christian white man. Look at these hags of squaws, friend Doctor; I have no judgment in savage tempers, if they are not bloody minded, and ready to work their accursed pleasures on us all. Now, so long as you keep upon the ass, and maintain the fierce look which is far from being your natural gift, fear of so great a medicine may serve to keep down their courage. I am placed here, like a general at the opening of the battle, and it has become my duty to make such use of all my force as, in my judgment, each is best fitted to perform. If I know these niceties, you will be more serviceable for your countenance just now than in any more stirring exploits.”

“Harkee, old trapper,” shouted Paul, whose patience could no longer maintain itself under the calculating and prolix explanations of the other, “suppose you cut two things I can name, short off. That is to say, your conversation, which is agreeable enough over a well baked buffalo’s hump, and these damnable thongs of hide, which, according to my experience, can be pleasant nowhere. A single

stroke of your knife would be of more service, just now, than the longest speech that was ever made in a Kentucky court-house.”

“Ay, court-houses are the 'happy hunting-grounds,' as a Red-skin would say, for them that are born with gifts no better than such as lie in the tongue. I was carried into one of the lawless holes myself once, and it was all about a thing of no more value than the skin of a deer. The Lord forgive them!—the Lord forgive them!—they knew no better, and they did according to their weak judgments, and therefore the more are they to be pitied; and yet it was a solemn sight to see an aged man, who had always lived in the air, laid neck and heels by the law, and held up as a spectacle for the women and boys of a wasteful settlement to point their fingers at!”

“If such be your opinions of confinement, honest friend, you had better manifest the same, by putting us at liberty with as little delay as possible,” said Middleton, who, like his companion, began to find the tardiness of his often-tried companion quite as extraordinary as it was disagreeable.

“I should greatly like to do the same; especially in your behalf, Captain, who, being a soldier, might find not only pleasure but profit in examining, more at your ease, into the circumventions and cunning of an Indian fight. As to our friend, here, it is of but little matter, how much of this affair he examines, or how little, seeing that a bee is not to be overcome in the same manner as an Indian.”

“Old man, this trifling with our misery is inconsiderate, to give it a name no harsher—”

“Ay, your grand'ther was of a hot and hurrying mind, and one must not expect, that the young of a panther will crawl the 'arth like the litter of a porcupine. Now keep you both silent, and what I say shall have the appearance of being spoken concerning the movements that are going on in the bottom; all of which will serve to put jealousy to sleep, and to shut the eyes of such as rarely close them on wickedness and cruelty. In the first place, then, you must know that I have reason to think yonder treacherous Teton has left an order to put us all to death, so soon as he thinks the deed may be done secretly, and without tumult.”

“Great Heaven! will you suffer us to be butchered like unresisting sheep?”

“Hist, Captain, hist; a hot temper is none of the best, when cunning is more needed than blows. Ah, the Pawnee is a noble boy! it would do your heart good to see how he draws off from the river, in order to invite his enemies to cross; and yet, according to my failing sight, they count two warriors to his one! But as I was saying, little good comes of haste and thoughtlessness. The facts are so plain that any child may see into their wisdom. The savages are of many minds as to the manner of our treatment. Some fear us for colour, and would gladly let us go, and other some would show us the mercy that the doe receives from the hungry wolf. When opposition gets fairly into the councils of a tribe, it is rarely that humanity is the gainer. Now see you these wrinkled and cruel-minded squaws—No, you cannot see them as you lie, but nevertheless they are here, ready and willing, like so many raging she-bears, to work their will upon us so soon as the proper time shall come.”

“Harkee, old gentleman trapper,” interrupted Paul, with a little bitterness in his manner; “do you tell us these matters for our amusement, or for your own? If for ours, you may keep your breath for the next race you run, as I am tickled nearly to suffocation, already, with my part of the fun.”

“Hist”—said the trapper, cutting with great dexterity and rapidity the thong, which bound one of the arms of Paul to his body, and dropping his knife at the same time within reach of the liberated hand. “Hist, boy, hist; that was a lucky moment! The yell from the bottom drew the eyes of these blood-suckers in another quarter, and so far we are safe. Now make a proper use of your advantages; but be careful, that what you do, is done without being seen.”

“Thank you for this small favour, old deliberation,” muttered the bee-hunter, “though it comes like a snow in May, somewhat out of season.”

“Foolish boy!” reproachfully exclaimed the other, who had moved to a little distance from his friends, and appeared to be attentively regarding the movements of the hostile parties, “will you never learn to know the wisdom of patience? And you, too, Captain; though a man myself, that seldom ruffles his temper by vain feelings, I see that you are silent, because you scorn to ask favours any longer from one you think too slow to grant them. No doubt, ye are both young, and filled with the pride of your strength and manhood, and I dare say you thought it only needful to cut the thongs, to leave you masters of the ground. But he, that has seen much, is apt to think much. Had I run like a bustling woman to have given you freedom, these hags of the Siouxes would have seen the same, and then where would you both have found yourselves? Under the tomahawk and the knife, like helpless and outcrying children, though gifted with the size and beards of men. Ask our friend, the bee-hunter, in what condition he finds himself to struggle with a Teton boy, after so many hours of bondage; much less with a dozen merciless and bloodthirsty squaws!”

“Truly, old trapper,” returned Paul, stretching his limbs, which were by this time entirely released, and endeavouring to restore the suspended circulation, “you have some judgmatical notions in these matters. Now here am I, Paul Hover, a man who will give in to few at wrestle or race, nearly as helpless as the day I paid my first visit to the house of old Paul, who is dead and gone,—the Lord forgive him any little blunders he may have made while he tarried in Kentucky! Now there is my foot on the ground, so far as eye-sight has any virtue, and yet it would take no great temptation to make me swear it didn't touch the earth by six inches. I say, honest friend, since you have done so much, have the goodness to keep these damnable squaws, of whom you say so many interesting things, at a little distance, till I have got the blood of this arm in motion, and am ready to receive them.”

The trapper made a sign that he perfectly understood the case; and he walked towards the superannuated savage, who began to manifest an intention of commencing his assigned task, leaving the bee-hunter to recover the use of his limbs as well as he could, and to put Middleton in a similar situation to defend himself.

Mahtoree had not mistaken his man, in selecting the one he did to execute his bloody purpose. He had chosen one of those ruthless savages, more or less of whom are to be found in every tribe, who had purchased a certain share of military reputation, by the exhibition of a hardihood that found its impulses in an innate love of cruelty. Contrary to the high and chivalrous sentiment, which among the Indians of the prairies renders it a deed of even greater merit to bear off the trophy of victory from a fallen foe, than to slay him, he had been remarkable for preferring the pleasure of destroying life, to the glory of striking the dead. While the more self-devoted and ambitious braves were intent on personal honour, he had always been seen, established behind some favourable cover,



depriving the wounded of hope, by finishing that which a more gallant warrior had begun. In all the cruelties of the tribe he had ever been foremost; and no Sioux was so uniformly found on the side of merciless councils.

He had awaited, with an impatience which his long practised restraint could with difficulty subdue, for the moment to arrive when he might proceed to execute the wishes of the great chief, without whose approbation and powerful protection he would not have dared to undertake a step, that had so many opposers in the nation. But events had been hastening to an issue, between the hostile parties; and the time had now arrived, greatly to his secret and malignant joy, when he was free to act his will.

The trapper found him distributing knives to the ferocious hags, who received the presents chanting a low monotonous song, that recalled the losses of their people, in various conflicts with the whites, and which extolled the pleasures and glory of revenge. The appearance of such a group was enough of itself to have deterred one, less accustomed to such sights than the old man, from trusting himself within the circle of their wild and repulsive rites.

Each of the crones, as she received the weapon, commenced a slow and measured, but ungainly, step, around the savage, until the whole were circling him in a sort of magic dance. The movements were timed, in some degree, by the words of their songs, as were their gestures by the ideas. When they spoke of their own losses, they tossed their long straight locks of grey into the air, or suffered them to fall in confusion upon their withered necks; but as the sweetness of returning blow for blow was touched upon, by any among them, it was answered by a common howl, as well as by gestures, that were sufficiently expressive of the manner in which they were exciting themselves to the necessary state of fury.

Into the very centre of this ring of seeming demons, the trapper now stalked, with the same calmness and observation as he would have walked into a village church. No other change was made by his appearance, than a renewal of the threatening gestures, with, if possible, a still less equivocal display of their remorseless intentions. Making a sign for them to cease, the old man demanded—

“Why do the mothers of the Tetons sing with bitter tongues? The Pawnee prisoners are not yet in their village; their young men have not come back loaded with scalps!”

He was answered by a general howl, and a few of the boldest of the furies even ventured to approach him, flourishing their knives within a dangerous proximity of his own steady eye-balls.

“It is a warrior you see, and no runner of the Long-knives, whose face grows paler at the sight of a tomahawk,” returned the trapper, without moving a muscle. “Let the Sioux women think; if one White-skin dies, a hundred spring up where he falls.”

Still the hags made no other answer, than by increasing their speed in the circle, and occasionally raising the threatening expressions of their chant, into louder and more intelligible strains. Suddenly, one of the oldest, and the most ferocious of them all, broke out of the ring, and skirred away in the direction of her victims, like a rapacious bird, that having wheeled on poised wings, for the time necessary to ensure its object, makes the final dart upon its prey. The others followed, a disorderly and screaming flock, fearful of being too late to reap their portion of the sanguinary pleasure.

“Mighty medicine of my people!” shouted the old man, in the Teton tongue; “lift your voice and speak, that the Sioux nation may hear.”

Whether Asinus had acquired so much knowledge, by his recent experience, as to know the value of his sonorous properties, or the strange spectacle of a dozen hags flitting past him, filling the air with such sounds as were even grating to the ears of an ass, most moved his temper, it is certain that the animal did that which Obed was requested to do, and probably with far greater effect than if the naturalist had strove with his mightiest effort to be heard. It was the first time the strange beast had spoken, since his arrival in the encampment. Admonished by so terrible a warning, the hags scattered themselves, like vultures frightened from their prey, still screaming, and but half diverted from their purpose.

In the mean time the sudden appearance, and the imminency of the danger, quickened the blood in the veins of Paul and Middleton, more than all their laborious frictions, and physical expedients. The former had actually risen to his feet, and assumed an attitude which perhaps threatened more than the worthy bee-hunter was able to perform, and even the latter had mounted to his knees, and shown a disposition to do good service for his life. The unaccountable release of the captives from their bonds was attributed, by the hags, to the incantations of the medicine; and the mistake was probably of as much service, as the miraculous and timely interposition of Asinus in their favour.

“Now is the time to come out of our ambushment,” exclaimed the old man, hastening to join his friends, “and to make open and manful war. It would have been policy to have kept back the struggle, until the Captain was in better condition to join, but as we have unmasked our battery, why, we must maintain the ground—”

He was interrupted by feeling a gigantic hand on his shoulder. Turning, under a sort of confused impression that necromancy was actually abroad in the place, he found that he was in the hands of a sorcerer no less dangerous and powerful than Ishmael Bush. The file of the squatter's well-armed sons, that was seen issuing from behind the still standing tent of Mahtoree, explained at once, not only the manner in which their rear had been turned, while their attention had been so earnestly bestowed on matters in front, but the utter impossibility of resistance.

Neither Ishmael, nor his sons deemed it necessary to enter into prolix explanations. Middleton and Paul were bound again, with extraordinary silence and despatch, and this time not even the aged trapper was exempt from a similar fortune. The tent was struck, the females placed upon the horses, and the whole were on the way towards the squatter's encampment, with a celerity that might well have served to keep alive the idea of magic.

During this summary and brief disposition of things, the disappointed agent of Mahtoree and his callous associates were seen flying across the plain, in the direction of the retiring families; and when Ishmael left the spot with his prisoners and his booty, the ground, which had so lately been alive with the bustle and life of an extensive Indian encampment, was as still and empty as any other spot in those extensive wastes.

## CHAPTER XXX

Is this proceeding just and honourable?  
—Shakspeare.

During the occurrence of these events on the upland plain, the warriors on the bottom had not been idle. We left the adverse bands watching one another on the opposite banks of the stream, each endeavouring to excite its enemy to some act of indiscretion, by the most reproachful taunts and revilings. But the Pawnee chief was not slow to discover that his crafty antagonist had no objection to waste the time so idly, and, as they mutually proved, in expedients that were so entirely useless. He changed his plans, accordingly, and withdrew from the bank, as has been already explained through the mouth of the trapper, in order to invite the more numerous host of the Siouzes to cross. The challenge was not accepted, and the Loups were compelled to frame some other method to attain their end.

Instead of any longer throwing away the precious moments, in fruitless endeavours to induce his foe to cross the stream, the young partisan of the Pawnees led his troops, at a swift gallop, along its margin, in quest of some favourable spot, where by a sudden push he might throw his own band without loss to the opposite shore. The instant his object was discovered, each mounted Teton received a footman behind him, and Mahtoree was still enabled to concentrate his whole force against the effort. Perceiving that his design was anticipated, and unwilling to blow his horses by a race that would disqualify them for service, even after they had succeeded in outstripping the more heavily-burdened cattle of the Siouzes, Hard-Heart drew up, and came to a dead halt on the very margin of the water-course.

As the country was too open for any of the usual devices of savage warfare, and time was so pressing, the chivalrous Pawnee resolved to bring on the result by one of those acts of personal daring, for which the Indian braves are so remarkable, and by which they often purchase their highest and dearest renown. The spot he had selected was favourable to such a project. The river, which throughout most of its course was deep and rapid, had expanded there to more than twice its customary width, and the rippling of its waters proved that it flowed over a shallow bottom. In the centre of the current there was an extensive and naked bed of sand, but a little raised above the level of the stream and of a colour and consistency which warranted, to a practised eye, that it afforded a firm and safe foundation for the foot. To this spot the partisan now turned his wistful gaze, nor was he long in making his decision. First speaking to his warriors, and apprising them of his intentions, he dashed into the current, and partly by swimming, and more by the use of his horse's feet, he reached the island in safety.

The experience of Hard-Heart had not deceived him. When his snorting steed issued from the water, he found himself on a tremendous but damp and compact bed of sand, that was admirably adapted to the exhibition of the finest powers of the animal. The horse seemed conscious of the advantage, and bore his warlike rider, with an elasticity of step and a loftiness of air, that would have done no discredit to the highest trained and most generous charger. The blood of the chief himself quickened with the excitement of his situation. He sat the beast as if conscious that the eyes of two tribes were on his movements; and as nothing could be more acceptable and grateful to his own band, than this display of native grace and courage, so nothing could be more taunting and humiliating to their enemies.

The sudden appearance of the Pawnee on the sands was announced among the Tetons, by a general yell of savage anger. A rush was made to the shore, followed by a discharge of fifty arrows and a few fuses, and, on the part of several braves, there was a plain manifestation of a desire to plunge into the water, in order to punish the temerity of their insolent foe. But a call and a mandate, from Mahtoree, checked the rising, and nearly ungovernable, temper of his band. So far from allowing a single foot to be wet, or a repetition of the fruitless efforts of his people to drive away their foe with missiles, the whole of the party was commanded to retire from the shore, while he himself communicated his intentions to one or two of his most favoured followers.

When the Pawnees observed the rush of their enemies, twenty warriors rode into the stream; but so soon as they perceived that the Tetons had withdrawn, they fell back to a man, leaving the young chief to the support of his own often-tried skill and well-established courage. The instructions of Hard-Heart, on quitting his band, had been worthy of the self-devotion and daring of his character. So long as single warriors came against him, he was to be left to the keeping of the Wahcondah and his own arm; but should the Siouzes attack him in numbers, he was to be sustained, man for man, even to the extent of his whole force. These generous orders were strictly obeyed; and though so many hearts in the troop panted to share in the glory and danger of their partisan, not a warrior was found, among them all, who did not know how to conceal his impatience under the usual mask of Indian self-restraint. They watched the issue with quick and jealous eyes, nor did a single exclamation of surprise escape them, when they saw, as will soon be apparent, that the experiment of their chief was as likely to conduce to peace as to war.

Mahtoree was not long in communicating his plans to his confidants, whom he as quickly dismissed to join their fellows in the rear. The Teton entered a short distance into the stream and halted. Here he raised his hand several times, with the palm outwards, and made several of those other signs, which are construed into a pledge of amicable intentions among the inhabitants of those regions. Then, as if to confirm the sincerity of his faith, he cast his fusee to the shore, and entered deeper into the water, where he again came to a stand, in order to see in what manner the Pawnee would receive his pledges of peace.

The crafty Sioux had not made his calculations on the noble and honest nature of his more youthful rival in vain. Hard-Heart had continued galloping across the sands, during the discharge of missiles and the appearance of a general onset, with the same proud and confident mien, as that with which he had first braved the danger. When he saw the well-known person of the Teton partisan enter the river, he waved his hand in triumph, and flourishing his lance, he raised the thrilling war-cry of his people, as a challenge for him to come on. But when he saw the signs of a truce, though deeply practised in the treachery of savage combats, he disdained to show a less manly reliance on himself, than that which his enemy had seen fit to exhibit. Riding to the farthest extremity of the sands, he cast his

own fusee from him, and returned to the point whence he had started.

The two chiefs were now armed alike. Each had his spear, his bow, his quiver, his little battle-axe, and his knife; and each had, also, a shield of hides, which might serve as a means of defence against a surprise from any of these weapons. The Sioux no longer hesitated, but advanced deeper into the stream, and soon landed on a point of the island which his courteous adversary had left free for that purpose. Had one been there to watch the countenance of Mahtoree, as he crossed the water that separated him from the most formidable and the most hated of all his rivals, he might have fancied that he could trace the gleamings of a secret joy, breaking through the cloud which deep cunning and heartless treachery had drawn before his swarthy visage; and yet there would have been moments, when he might have believed that the flashings of the Teton's eye and the expansion of his nostrils, had their origin in a nobler sentiment, and one more worthy of an Indian chief.

The Pawnee awaited the time of his enemy with calmness and dignity. The Teton made a short run or two, to curb the impatience of his steed, and to recover his seat after the effort of crossing, and then he rode into the centre of the place, and invited the other, by a courteous gesture, to approach. Hard-Heart drew nigh, until he found himself at a distance equally suited to advance or to retreat, and, in his turn, he came to a stand, keeping his glowing eye riveted on that of his enemy. A long and grave pause succeeded this movement, during which these two distinguished braves, who were now, for the first time, confronted, with arms in their hands, sat regarding each other, like warriors who knew how to value the merits of a gallant foe, however hated. But the mien of Mahtoree was far less stern and warlike than that of the partisan of the Loups. Throwing his shield over his shoulder, as if to invite the confidence of the other, he made a gesture of salutation and was the first to speak.

"Let the Pawnees go upon the hills," he said, "and look from the morning to the evening sun, from the country of snows to the land of many flowers, and they will see that the earth is very large. Why cannot the Red-men find room on it for all their villages?"

"Has the Teton ever known a warrior of the Loups come to his towns to beg a place for his lodge?" returned the young brave, with a look in which pride and contempt were not attempted to be concealed, "when the Pawnees hunt, do they send runners to ask Mahtoree if there are no Siouxes on the prairies?"

"When there is hunger in the lodge of a warrior, he looks for the buffaloe, which is given him for food," the Teton continued, struggling to keep down the ire excited by the other's scorn. "The Wahcondah has made more of them than he has made Indians. He has not said, This buffaloe shall be for a Pawnee, and that for a Dahcotah; this beaver for Konza, and that for an Omawhaw. No; he said, There are enough. I love my red children, and I have given them great riches. The swiftest horse shall not go from the village of the Tetons to the village of the Loups in many suns. It is far from the towns of the Pawnees to the river of the Osages. There is room for all that I love. Why then should a Red-man strike his brother?"

Hard-Heart dropped one end of his lance to the earth, and having also cast his shield across his shoulder, he sat leaning lightly on the weapon, as he answered with a smile of no doubtful expression—

"Are the Tetons weary of the hunts, and of the warpath? Do they wish to cook the venison, and not to kill it? Do they intend to let the hair cover their heads, that their enemies shall not know where to find their scalps? Go; a Pawnee warrior will never come among such Sioux squaws for a wife!"

A frightful gleam of ferocity broke out of the restraint of the Dahcotah's countenance, as he listened to this biting insult; but he was quick in subduing the tell-tale feeling, in an expression much better suited to his present purpose.

"This is the way a young chief should talk of war," he answered with singular composure; "but Mahtoree has seen the misery of more winters than his brother. When the nights have been long, and darkness has been in his lodge, while the young men slept, he has thought of the hardships of his people. He has said to himself, Teton, count the scalps in your smoke. They are all red but two! Does the wolf destroy the wolf, or the rattler strike his brother? You know they do not; therefore, Teton, are you wrong to go on a path that leads to the village of a Red-skin, with a tomahawk in your hand."

"The Sioux would rob the warrior of his fame? He would say to his young men, Go, dig roots in the prairies, and find holes to bury your tomahawks in; you are no longer braves!"

"If the tongue of Mahtoree ever says thus," returned the crafty chief, with an appearance of strong indignation, "let his women cut it out, and burn it with the offals of the buffaloe. No," he added, advancing a few feet nigher to the immovable Hard-Heart, as if in the sincerity of confidence; "the Red-man can never want an enemy: they are plentier than the leaves on the trees, the birds in the heavens, or the buffaloes on the prairies. Let my brother open his eyes wide: does he no where see an enemy he would strike?"

"How long is it since the Teton counted the scalps of his warriors, that were drying in the smoke of a Pawnee lodge? The hand that took them is here, and ready to make eighteen, twenty."

"Now, let not the mind of my brother go on a crooked path. If a Red-skin strikes a Red-skin for ever, who will be masters of the prairies, when no warriors are left to say, 'They are mine?' Hear the voices of the old men. They tell us that in their days many Indians have come out of the woods under the rising sun, and that they have filled the prairies with their complaints of the robberies of the Long-knives. Where a Pale-face comes, a Red-man cannot stay. The land is too small. They are always hungry. See, they are here already!"

As the Teton spoke, he pointed towards the tents of Ishmael, which were in plain sight, and then he paused, to await the effect of his words on the mind of his ingenuous foe. Hard-Heart listened like one in whom a train of novel ideas had been excited by the reasoning of the other. He mused for a minute before he demanded—

"What do the wise chiefs of the Sioux say must be done?"

"They think that the moccasin of every Pale-face should be followed, like the track of the bear. That the Long-knife, who comes upon the prairie, should never go back. That the path shall be open to those who come, and shut to those who go. Yonder are many. They have horses and guns. They are rich, but we are poor. Will the Pawnees meet the Tetons in council? and when the sun is gone

behind the Rocky Mountains, they will say, This is for a Loup and this for a Sioux."

"Teton—no! Hard-Heart has never struck the stranger. They come into his lodge and eat, and they go out in safety. A mighty chief is their friend! When my people call the young men to go on the war-path, the moccasin of Hard-Heart is the last. But his village is no sooner hid by the trees, than it is the first. No, Teton; his arm will never be lifted against the stranger."

"Fool; die, with empty hands!" Mahtoree exclaimed, setting an arrow to his bow, and sending it, with a sudden and deadly aim, full at the naked bosom of his generous and confiding enemy.

The action of the treacherous Teton was too quick, and too well matured, to admit of any of the ordinary means of defence on the part of the Pawnee. His shield was hanging at his shoulder, and even the arrow had been suffered to fall from its place, and lay in the hollow of the hand which grasped his bow. But the quick eye of the brave had time to see the movement, and his ready thoughts did not desert him. Pulling hard and with a jerk upon the rein, his steed reared his forward legs into the air, and, as the rider bent his body low, the horse served for a shield against the danger. So true, however, was the aim, and so powerful the force by which it was sent, that the arrow entered the neck of the animal, and broke the skin on the opposite side.

Quicker than thought Hard-Heart sent back an answering arrow. The shield of the Teton was transfixed, but his person was untouched. For a few moments the twang of the bow and the glancing of arrows were incessant, notwithstanding the combatants were compelled to give so large a portion of their care to the means of defence. The quivers were soon exhausted; and though blood had been drawn, it was not in sufficient quantities to impair the energy of the combat.

A series of masterly and rapid evolutions with the horses now commenced. The wheelings, the charges, the advances, and the circuitous retreats, were like the flights of circling swallows. Blows were struck with the lance, the sand was scattered in the air, and the shocks often seemed to be unavoidably fatal; but still each party kept his seat, and still each rein was managed with a steady hand. At length the Teton was driven to the necessity of throwing himself from his horse, to escape a thrust that would otherwise have proved fatal. The Pawnee passed his lance through the beast, uttering a shout of triumph as he galloped by. Turning in his tracks, he was about to push the advantage, when his own mettled steed staggered and fell, under a burden that he could no longer sustain. Mahtoree answered his premature cry of victory, and rushed upon the entangled youth, with knife and tomahawk. The utmost agility of Hard-Heart had not sufficed to extricate himself in season from the fallen beast. He saw that his case was desperate. Feeling for his knife, he took the blade between a finger and thumb, and cast it with admirable coolness at his advancing foe. The keen weapon whirled a few times in the air, and its point meeting the naked breast of the impetuous Sioux, the blade was buried to the buck-horn haft.

Mahtoree laid his hand on the weapon, and seemed to hesitate whether to withdraw it or not. For a moment his countenance darkened with the most inextinguishable hatred and ferocity, and then, as if inwardly admonished how little time he had to lose, he staggered to the edge of the sands, and halted with his feet in the water. The cunning and duplicity, which had so long obscured the brighter and nobler traits of his character, were lost in the never dying sentiment of pride, which he had imbibed in youth.

"Boy of the Loups!" he said with a smile of grim satisfaction, "the scalp of a mighty Dahcotah shall never dry in Pawnee smoke!"

Drawing the knife from the wound, he hurled it towards the enemy in disdain. Then shaking his arm at his successful foe, his swarthy countenance appearing to struggle with volumes of scorn and hatred, that he could not utter with the tongue, he cast himself headlong into one of the most rapid veins of the current, his hand still waving in triumph above the fluid, even after his body had sunk into the tide for ever. Hard-Heart was by this time free. The silence, which had hitherto reigned in the bands, was suddenly broken by general and tumultuous shouts. Fifty of the adverse warriors were already in the river, hastening to destroy or to defend the conqueror, and the combat was rather on the eve of its commencement than near its termination. But to all these signs of danger and need, the young victor was insensible. He sprang for the knife, and bounded with the foot of an antelope along the sands, looking for the receding fluid which concealed his prize. A dark, bloody spot indicated the place, and, armed with the knife, he plunged into the stream, resolute to die in the flood, or to return with his trophy.

In the mean time, the sands became a scene of bloodshed and violence. Better mounted and perhaps more ardent, the Pawnees had, however, reached the spot in sufficient numbers to force their enemies to retire. The victors pushed their success to the opposite shore, and gained the solid ground in the melee of the fight. Here they were met by all the unmounted Teton, and, in their turn, they were forced to give way.

The combat now became more characteristic and circumspect. As the hot impulses, which had driven both parties to mingle in so deadly a struggle, began to cool, the chiefs were enabled to exercise their influence, and to temper the assaults with prudence. In consequence of the admonitions of their leaders, the Siouxes sought such covers as the grass afforded, or here and there some bush or slight inequality of the ground, and the charges of the Pawnee warriors necessarily became more wary, and of course less fatal.

In this manner the contest continued with a varied success, and without much loss. The Siouxes had succeeded in forcing themselves into a thick growth of rank grass, where the horses of their enemies could not enter, or where, when entered, they were worse than useless. It became necessary to dislodge the Teton from this cover, or the object of the combat must be abandoned. Several desperate efforts had been repulsed, and the disheartened Pawnees were beginning to think of a retreat, when the well-known war-cry of Hard-Heart was heard at hand, and at the next instant the chief appeared in their centre, flourishing the scalp of the Great Sioux, as a banner that would lead to victory.

He was greeted by a shout of delight, and followed into the cover, with an impetuosity that, for the moment, drove all before it. But the bloody trophy in the hand of the partisan served as an incentive to the attacked, as well as to the assailants. Mahtoree had left many a daring brave behind him in his band, and the orator, who in the debates of that day had manifested such pacific thoughts, now exhibited the most generous self-devotion, in order to wrest the memorial of a man he had never loved, from the hands of the avowed enemies of his people.

The result was in favour of numbers. After a severe struggle, in which the finest displays of personal intrepidity were exhibited by all the chiefs, the Pawnees were compelled to retire upon the open bottom, closely pressed by the Siouxes, who failed not to seize each

foot of ground ceded by their enemies. Had the Tetons stayed their efforts on the margin of the grass, it is probable that the honour of the day would have been theirs, notwithstanding the irretrievable loss they had sustained in the death of Mahtoree. But the more reckless braves of the band were guilty of an indiscretion, that entirely changed the fortunes of the fight, and suddenly stripped them of their hard-earned advantages.

A Pawnee chief had sunk under the numerous wounds he had received, and he fell, a target for a dozen arrows, in the very last group of his retiring party. Regardless alike of inflicting further injury on their foes, and of the temerity of the act, the Sioux braves bounded forward with a whoop, each man burning with the wish to reap the high renown of striking the body of the dead. They were met by Hard-Heart and a chosen knot of warriors, all of whom were just as stoutly bent on saving the honour of their nation, from so foul a stain. The struggle was hand to hand, and blood began to flow more freely. As the Pawnees retired with the body, the Siouxes pressed upon their footsteps, and at length the whole of the latter broke out of the cover with a common yell, and threatened to bear down all opposition by sheer physical superiority.

The fate of Hard-Heart and his companions, all of whom would have died rather than relinquish their object, would have been quickly sealed, but for a powerful and unlooked-for interposition in their favour. A shout was heard from a little brake on the left, and a volley from the fatal western rifle immediately succeeded. Some five or six Siouxes leaped forward in the death agony, and every arm among them was as suddenly suspended, as if the lightning had flashed from the clouds to aid the cause of the Loups. Then came Ishmael and his stout sons in open view, bearing down upon their late treacherous allies, with looks and voices that proclaimed the character of the succour.

The shock was too much for the fortitude of the Tetons. Several of their bravest chiefs had already fallen, and those that remained were instantly abandoned by the whole of the inferior herd. A few of the most desperate braves still lingered nigh the fatal symbol of their honour, and there nobly met their deaths, under the blows of the re-encouraged Pawnees. A second discharge from the rifles of the squatter and his party completed the victory.

The Siouxes were now to be seen flying to more distant covers, with the same eagerness and desperation as, a few moments before, they had been plunging into the fight. The triumphant Pawnees bounded forward in chase, like so many high-blooded and well-trained hounds. On every side were heard the cries of victory, or the yell of revenge. A few of the fugitives endeavoured to bear away the bodies of their fallen warriors, but the hot pursuit quickly compelled them to abandon the slain, in order to preserve the living. Among all the struggles, which were made on that occasion, to guard the honour of the Siouxes from the stain which their peculiar opinions attached to the possession of the scalp of a fallen brave, but one solitary instance of success occurred.

The opposition of a particular chief to the hostile proceedings in the councils of that morning has been already seen. But, after having raised his voice in vain, in support of peace, his arm was not backward in doing its duty in the war. His prowess has been mentioned; and it was chiefly by his courage and example, that the Tetons sustained themselves in the heroic manner they did, when the death of Mahtoree was known. This warrior, who, in the figurative language of his people, was called "the Swooping Eagle," had been the last to abandon the hopes of victory. When he found that the support of the dreaded rifle had robbed his band of the hard-earned advantages, he sullenly retired amid a shower of missiles, to the secret spot where he had hid his horse, in the mazes of the highest grass. Here he found a new and an entirely unexpected competitor, ready to dispute with him for the possession of the beast. It was Bohrecheena, the aged friend of Mahtoree; he whose voice had been given in opposition to his own wiser opinions, transfixed with an arrow, and evidently suffering under the pangs of approaching death.

"I have been on my last war-path," said the grim old warrior, when he found that the real owner of the animal had come to claim his property; "shall a Pawnee carry the white hairs of a Sioux into his village, to be a scorn to his women and children?"

The other grasped his hand, answering to the appeal with the stern look of inflexible resolution. With this silent pledge, he assisted the wounded man to mount. So soon as he had led the horse to the margin of the cover, he threw himself also on its back, and securing his companion to his belt, he issued on the open plain, trusting entirely to the well-known speed of the beast for their mutual safety. The Pawnees were not long in catching a view of these new objects, and several turned their steeds to pursue. The race continued for a mile without a murmur from the sufferer, though in addition to the agony of his body, he had the pain of seeing his enemies approach at every leap of their horses.

"Stop," he said, raising a feeble arm to check the speed of his companion; "the Eagle of my tribe must spread his wings wider. Let him carry the white hairs of an old warrior into the burnt-wood village!"

Few words were necessary, between men who were governed by the same feelings of glory, and who were so well trained in the principles of their romantic honour. The Swooping Eagle threw himself from the back of the horse, and assisted the other to alight. The old man raised his tottering frame to its knees, and first casting a glance upward at the countenance of his countryman, as if to bid him adieu, he stretched out his neck to the blow he himself invited. A few strokes of the tomahawk, with a circling gash of the knife, sufficed to sever the head from the less valued trunk. The Teton mounted again, just in season to escape a flight of arrows which came from his eager and disappointed pursuers. Flourishing the grim and bloody visage, he darted away from the spot with a shout of triumph, and was seen scouring the plains, as if he were actually borne along on the wings of the powerful bird from whose qualities he had received his flattering name. The Swooping Eagle reached his village in safety. He was one of the few Siouxes who escaped from the massacre of that fatal day; and for a long time he alone of the saved was able to lift his voice, in the councils of his nation, with undiminished confidence.

The knife and the lance cut short the retreat of the larger portion of the vanquished. Even the retiring party of the women and children were scattered by the conquerors; and the sun had long sunk behind the rolling outline of the western horizon, before the fell business of that disastrous defeat was entirely ended.

## CHAPTER XXXI

Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?  
—Shakspeare.

The day dawned, the following morning, on a more, tranquil scene. The work of blood had entirely ceased; and as the sun arose, its light was shed on a broad expanse of quiet and solitude. The tents of Ishmael were still standing, where they had been last seen, but not another vestige of human existence could be traced in any other part of the waste. Here and there little flocks of ravenous birds were sailing and screaming above those spots where some heavy-footed Teton had met his death, but every other sign of the recent combat had passed away. The river was to be traced far through the endless meadows, by its serpentine and smoking bed; and the little silvery clouds of vapour, which hung above the pools and springs, were beginning to melt in air, as they felt the quickening warmth, which, pouring from the glowing sky, shed its bland and subtle influence on every object of the vast and unshadowed region. The prairie was like the heavens after the passage of the gust, soft, calm, and soothing.

It was in the midst of such a scene that the family of the squatter assembled to make their final decision, concerning the several individuals who had been thrown into their power, by the fluctuating chances of the incidents related. Every being possessing life and liberty had been afoot, since the first streak of grey had lighted the east; and even the youngest of the erratic brood seemed conscious that the moment had arrived, when circumstances were about to transpire that might leave a lasting impression on the wild fortunes of their semi-barbarous condition.

Ishmael moved through his little encampment, with the seriousness of one who had been unexpectedly charged with matters of a gravity, exceeding any of the ordinary occurrences of his irregular existence. His sons however, who had so often found occasions to prove the inexorable severity of their father's character, saw, in his sullen mien and cold eye, rather a determination to adhere to his resolutions, which usually were as obstinately enforced as they were harshly conceived, than any evidences of wavering or doubt. Even Esther was sensibly affected by the important matters that pressed so heavily on the interests of her family. While she neglected none of those domestic offices, which would probably have proceeded under any conceivable circumstances, just as the world turns round with earthquakes rending its crust and volcanoes consuming its vitals, yet her voice was pitched to a lower and more foreboding key than common, and the still frequent chidings of her children were tempered by something like the milder dignity of parental authority.

Abiram, as usual, seemed the one most given to solicitude and doubt. There were certain misgivings, in the frequent glances that he turned on the unyielding countenance of Ishmael, which might have betrayed how little of their former confidence and good understanding existed between them. His looks appeared to be vacillating between hope and fear. At times, his countenance lighted with the gleamings of a sordid joy, as he bent his look on the tent which contained his recovered prisoner, and then, again, the impression seemed unaccountably chased away by the shadows of intense apprehension. When under the influence of the latter feeling, his eye never failed to seek the visage of his dull and impenetrable kinsman. But there he rather found reason for alarm than grounds of encouragement, for the whole character of the squatter's countenance expressed the fearful truth, that he had redeemed his dull faculties from the influence of the kidnapper, and that his thoughts were now brooding only on the achievement of his own stubborn intentions.

It was in this state of things that the sons of Ishmael, in obedience to an order from their father, conducted the several subjects of his contemplated decisions, from their places of confinement into the open air. No one was exempted from this arrangement. Middleton and Inez, Paul and Ellen, Obed and the trapper, were all brought forth and placed in situations that were deemed suitable to receive the sentence of their arbitrary judge. The younger children gathered around the spot, in momentary but engrossing curiosity, and even Esther quitted her culinary labours, and drew nigh to listen.

Hard-Heart alone, of all his band, was present to witness the novel and far from unimposing spectacle. He stood leaning, gravely, on his lance, while the smoking steed, that grazed nigh, showed that he had ridden far and hard to be a spectator, on the occasion.

Ishmael had received his new ally with a coldness that showed his entire insensibility to that delicacy, which had induced the young chief to come alone, in order that the presence of his warriors might not create uneasiness, or distrust. He neither courted their assistance, nor dreaded their enmity, and he now proceeded to the business of the hour with as much composure, as if the species of patriarchal power, he wielded, was universally recognised.

There is something elevating in the possession of authority, however it may be abused. The mind is apt to make some efforts to prove the fitness between its qualities and the condition of its owner, though it may often fail, and render that ridiculous which was only hated before. But the effect on Ishmael Bush was not so disheartening. Grave in exterior, saturnine by temperament, formidable by his physical means, and dangerous from his lawless obstinacy, his self-constituted tribunal excited a degree of awe, to which even the intelligent Middleton could not bring himself to be entirely insensible. Little time, however, was given to arrange his thoughts; for the squatter, though unaccustomed to haste, having previously made up his mind, was not disposed to waste the moments in delay. When he saw that all were in their places, he cast a dull look over his prisoners, and addressed himself to the Captain, as the principal man among the imaginary delinquents.

"I am called upon this day, to fill the office which in the settlements you give unto judges, who are set apart to decide on matters that arise between man and man. I have but little knowledge of the ways of the courts, though there is a rule that is known unto all, and which teaches, that an 'eye must be returned for an eye,' and a 'tooth for a tooth.' I am no troubler of countyhouses, and least of all do I like living on a plantation that the sheriff has surveyed; yet there is a reason in such a law, that makes it a safe rule to journey by, and therefore it ar' a solemn fact that this day shall I abide by it, and give unto all and each that which is his due and no more."

When Ishmael had delivered his mind thus far, he paused and looked about him, as if he would trace the effects in the countenances

of his hearers. When his eye met that of Middleton, he was answered by the latter—

“If the evil-doer is to be punished, and he that has offended none to be left to go at large, you must change situations with me, and become a prisoner instead of a judge.”

“You mean to say that I have done you wrong, in taking the lady from her father's house, and leading her so far against her will into these wild districts,” returned the unmoved squatter, who manifested as little resentment as he betrayed compunction at the charge. “I shall not put the lie on the back of an evil deed, and deny your words. Since things have come to this pass between us, I have found time to think the matter over at my leisure, and though none of your swift thinkers, who can see, or who pretend to see, into the nature of all things, by a turn of the eye, yet am I a man open to reason, and give me my time, one who is not given to deny the truth. Therefore have I mainly concluded, that it was a mistake to take a child from its parent, and the lady shall be returned whence she has been brought, as tenderly and as safely as man can do it.”

“Ay, ay,” added Esther, “the man is right. Poverty and labour bore hard upon him, especially as county officers were getting troublesome, and in a weak moment he did the wicked act; but he has listened to my words, and his mind has got round again into its honest corner. An awful and a dangerous thing it is to be bringing the daughters of other people into a peaceable and well-governed family!”

“And who will thank you for the same, after what has been already done?” muttered Abiram, with a grin of disappointed cupidity, in which malignity and terror were disgustingly united; “when the devil has once made out his account, you may look for your receipt in full only at his hands.”

“Peace!” said Ishmael, stretching his heavy hand towards his kinsman, in a manner that instantly silenced the speaker. “Your voice is like a raven's in my ears. If you had never spoken, I should have been spared this shame.”

“Since then you are beginning to lose sight of your errors, and to see the truth,” said Middleton, “do not things by halves, but, by the generosity of your conduct, purchase friends who may be of use in warding off any future danger from the law—”

“Young man,” interrupted the squatter, with a dark frown, “you, too, have said enough. If fear of the law had come over me, you would not be here to witness the manner in which Ishmael Bush deals out justice.”

“Smother not your good intentions; and remember, if you contemplate violence to any among us, that the arm of that law you affect to despise, reaches far, and that though its movements are sometimes slow, they are not the less certain!”

“Yes, there is too much truth in his words, squatter,” said the trapper, whose attentive ears rarely suffered a syllable to be utterly unheeded in his presence. “A busy and a troublesome arm it often proves to be here, in this land of America; where, as they say, man is left greatly to the following of his own wishes, compared to other countries; and happier, ay, and more manly and more honest, too, is he for the privilege! Why do you know, my men, that there are regions where the law is so busy as to say, In this fashion shall you live, in that fashion shall you die, and in such another fashion shall you take leave of the world, to be sent before the judgment-seat of the Lord! A wicked and a troublesome meddling is that, with the business of One who has not made His creatures to be herded, like oxen, and driven from field to field, as their stupid and selfish keepers may judge of their need and wants. A miserable land must that be, where they fetter the mind as well as the body, and where the creatures of God, being born children, are kept so by the wicked inventions of men who would take upon themselves the office of the great Governor of all!”

During the delivery of this pertinent opinion, Ishmael was content to be silent, though the look, with which he regarded the speaker, manifested any other feeling than that of amity. When the old man was done, he turned to Middleton, and continued the subject which the other had interrupted.

“As to ourselves, young Captain, there has been wrong on both sides. If I have borne hard upon your feelings, in taking away your wife with an honest intention of giving her back to you, when the plans of that devil incarnate were answered, so have you broken into my encampment, aiding and abetting, as they have called many an honest bargain, in destroying my property.”

“But what I did was to liberate—”

“The matter is settled between us,” interrupted Ishmael, with the air of one who, having made up his own opinion on the merits of the question, cared very little for those of other people; “you and your wife are free to go and come, when and how you please. Abner, set the Captain at liberty; and now, if you will tarry until I am ready to draw nigher to the settlements, you shall both have the benefit of carriage; if not, never say that you did not get a friendly offer.”

“Now, may the strong oppress me, and my sins be visited harshly on my own head, if I forget your honesty, however slow it has been in showing itself,” cried Middleton, hastening to the side of the weeping Inez, the instant he was released; “and, friend, I pledge you the honour of a soldier, that your own part of this transaction shall be forgotten, whatever I may deem fit to have done, when I reach a place where the arm of government can make itself felt.”

The dull smile, with which the squatter answered to this assurance, proved how little he valued the pledge that the youth, in the first revulsion of his feelings, was so free to make.

“Neither fear nor favour, but what I call justice, has brought me to this judgment,” he said, “do you that which may seem right in your eyes, and believe that the world is wide enough to hold us both, without our crossing each other's path again! If you ar' content, well; if you ar' not content, seek to ease your feelings in your own fashion. I shall not ask to be let up, when you once put me fairly down. And now, Doctor, have I come to your leaf in my accounts. It is time to foot up the small reckoning, that has been running on, for some time, atwixt us. With you, I entered into open and manly faith; in what manner have you kept it?”

The singular felicity, with which Ishmael had contrived to shift the responsibility of all that had passed, from his own shoulders to those of his prisoners, backed as it was by circumstances that hardly admitted of a very philosophical examination of any mooted point in ethics, was sufficiently embarrassing to the several individuals, who were so unexpectedly required to answer for a conduct which, in their simplicity, they had deemed so meritorious. The life of Obed had been so purely theoretic, that his amazement was not the least

embarrassing at a state of things which might not have proved so very remarkable had he been a little more practised in the ways of the world. The worthy naturalist was not the first by many, who found himself, at the precise moment when he was expecting praise, suddenly arraigned, to answer for the very conduct on which he rested all his claims to commendation. Though not a little scandalised, at the unexpected turn of the transaction, he was fain to make the best of circumstances, and to bring forth such matter in justification, as first presented itself to his disordered faculties.

"That there did exist a certain compactum, or agreement, between Obed Batt, M.D., and Ishmael Bush, viator, or erratic husbandman," he said, endeavouring to avoid all offence in the use of terms, "I am not disposed to deny. I will admit that it was therein conditioned, or stipulated, that a certain journey should be performed conjointly, or in company, until so many days had been numbered. But as the said time has fully expired, I presume it fair to infer that the bargain may now be said to be obsolete."

"Ishmael!" interrupted the impatient Esther, "make no words with a man who can break your bones as easily as set them, and let the poisoning devil go! He's a cheat, from box to phial. Give him half the prairie, and take the other half yourself. He an acclimator! I will engage to get the brats acclimated to a fever-and-ague bottom in a week, and not a word shall be uttered harder to pronounce than the bark of a cherry-tree, with perhaps a drop or two of western comfort. One thing ar' a fact, Ishmael; I like no fellow-travellers who can give a heavy feel to an honest woman's tongue, I—and that without caring whether her household is in order, or out of order."

The air of settled gloom, which had taken possession of the squatter's countenance, lighted for an instant with a look of dull drollery, as he answered—

"Different people might judge differently, Esther, of the virtue of the man's art. But sin' it is your wish to let him depart, I will not plough the prairie to make the walking rough. Friend, you are at liberty to go into the settlements, and there I would advise you to tarry, as men like me who make but few contracts, do not relish the custom of breaking them so easily."

"And now, Ishmael," resumed his conquering wife, "in order to keep a quiet family and to smother all heart-burnings between us, show yonder Red-skin and his daughter," pointing to the aged Le Balafre and the widowed Tachechana, "the way to their village, and let us say to them—God bless you, and farewell, in the same breath!"

"They are the captives of the Pawnee, according to the rules of Indian warfare, and I cannot meddle with his rights."

"Beware the devil, my man! He's a cheat and a tempter, and none can say they ar' safe with his awful delusions before their eyes! Take the advice of one who has the honour of your name at heart, and send the tawny Jezebel away."

The squatter laid his broad hand on her shoulder, and looking her steadily in the eye, he answered, in tones that were both stern and solemn—

"Woman, we have that before us which calls our thoughts to other matters than the follies you mean. Remember what is to come, and put your silly jealousy to sleep."

"It is true, it is true," murmured his wife, moving back among her daughters; "God forgive me, that I should forget it!"

"And now, young man; you, who have so often come into my clearing, under the pretence of lining the bee into his hole," resumed Ishmael, after a momentary pause, as if to recover the equilibrium of his mind, "with you there is a heavier account to settle. Not satisfied with rummaging my camp, you have stolen a girl who is akin to my wife, and who I had calculated to make one day a daughter of my own."

A stronger sensation was produced by this, than by any of the preceding interrogations. All the young men bent their curious eyes on Paul and Ellen, the former of whom seemed in no small mental confusion, while the latter bent her face on her bosom in shame.

"Harkee, friend Ishmael Bush," returned the bee-hunter, who found that he was expected to answer to the charge of burglary, as well as to that of abduction; "that I did not give the most civil treatment to your pots and pails, I am not going to gainsay. If you will name the price you put upon the articles, it is possible the damage may be quietly settled between us, and all hard feelings forgotten. I was not in a church-going humour when we got upon your rock, and it is more than probable there was quite as much kicking as preaching among your wares; but a hole in the best man's coat can be mended by money. As to the matter of Ellen Wade, here, it may not be got over so easily. Different people have different opinions on the subject of matrimony. Some think it is enough to say yes and no, to the questions of the magistrate, or of the parson, if one happens to be handy, in order to make a quiet house; but I think that where a young woman's mind is fairly bent on going in a certain direction, it will be quite as prudent to let her body follow. Not that I mean to say Ellen was not altogether forced to what she did, and therefore she is just as innocent, in this matter, as yonder jackass, who was made to carry her, and greatly against his will, too, as I am ready to swear he would say himself, if he could speak as loud as he can bray."

"Nelly," resumed the squatter, who paid very little attention to what Paul considered a highly creditable and ingenious vindication, "Nelly, this is a wide and a wicked world, on which you have been in such a hurry to cast yourself. You have fed and you have slept in my camp for a year, and I did hope that you had found the free air of the borders, enough to your mind to wish to remain among us."

"Let the girl have her will," muttered Esther, from the rear; "he, who might have persuaded her to stay, is sleeping in the cold and naked prairie, and little hope is left of changing her humour; besides, a woman's mind is a wilful thing, and not easily turned from its waywardness, as you know yourself, my man, or I should not be here the mother of your sons and daughters."

The squatter seemed reluctant to abandon his views of the abashed girl, so easily; and before he answered to the suggestion of his wife, he turned his usual dull look along the line of the curious countenances of his boys, as if to see whether there was not one among them fit to fill the place of the deceased. Paul was not slow to observe the expression, and hitting nigher than usual on the secret thoughts of the other, he believed he had fallen on an expedient which might remove every difficulty.

"It is quite plain, friend Bush," he said, "that there are two opinions in this matter; yours for your sons, and mine for myself. I see but one amicable way of settling this dispute, which is as follows:—do you make a choice among your boys of any you will, and let us walk off together for the matter of a few miles into the prairies; the one who stays behind, can never trouble any man's house or his fixen, and the one who comes back may make the best of his way he can, in the good wishes of the young woman."



“Paul!” exclaimed the reproachful, but smothered voice of Ellen.

“Never fear, Nelly,” whispered the literal bee-hunter, whose straight-going mind suggested no other motive of uneasiness, on the part of his mistress, than concern for himself; “I have taken the measure of them all, and you may trust an eye that has seen to line many a bee into his hole!”

“I am not about to set myself up as a ruler of inclinations,” observed the squatter. “If the heart of the child is truly in the settlements, let her declare it; she shall have no let or hinderance from me. Speak, Nelly, and let what you say come from your wishes, without fear or favour. Would you leave us to go with this young man into the settled countries, or will you tarry and share the little we have to give, but which to you we give so freely?”

Thus called upon to decide, Ellen could no longer hesitate. The glance of her eye was at first timid and furtive. But as the colour flushed her features, and her breathing became quick and excited, it was apparent that the native spirit of the girl was gaining the ascendancy over the bashfulness of sex.

“You took me a fatherless, impoverished, and friendless orphan,” she said, struggling to command her voice, “when others, who live in what may be called affluence compared to your state, chose to forget me; and may Heaven in its goodness bless you for it! The little I have done, will never pay you for that one act of kindness. I like not your manner of life; it is different from the ways of my childhood, and it is different from my wishes; still, had you not led this sweet and unoffending lady from her friends, I should never have quitted you, until you yourself had said, Go, and the blessing of God go with you!”

“The act was not wise, but it is repented of; and so far as it can be done, in safety, it shall be repaired. Now, speak freely, will you tarry, or will you go?”

“I have promised the lady,” said Ellen, dropping her eyes again to the earth, “not to leave her; and after she has received so much wrong from our hands, she may have a right to claim that I keep my word.”

“Take the cords from the young man,” said Ishmael. When the order was obeyed, he motioned for all his sons to advance, and he placed them in a row before the eyes of Ellen. “Now let there be no trifling, but open your heart. Here ar’ all I have to offer, besides a hearty welcome.”

The distressed girl turned her abashed look from the countenance of one of the young men to that of another, until her eye met the troubled and working features of Paul. Then nature got the better of forms. She threw herself into the arms of the bee-hunter, and sufficiently proclaimed her choice by sobbing aloud. Ishmael signed to his sons to fall back, and evidently mortified, though perhaps not disappointed by the result, he no longer hesitated.

“Take her,” he said, “and deal honestly and kindly by her. The girl has that in her which should make her welcome, in any man's house, and I should be loth to hear she ever came to harm. And now I have settled with you all, on terms that I hope you will not find hard, but, on the contrary, just and manly. I have only another question to ask, and that is of the Captain; do you choose to profit by my teams in going into the settlements, or not?”

“I hear, that some soldiers of my party are looking for me near the villages of the Pawnees,” said Middleton, “and I intend to accompany this chief, in order to join my men.”

“Then the sooner we part the better. Horses are plenty on the bottom. Go; make your choice, and leave us in peace.”

“That is impossible, while the old man, who has been a friend of my family near half a century, is left a prisoner. What has he done, that he too is not released?”

“Ask no questions that may lead to deceitful answers,” sullenly returned the squatter; “I have dealings of my own with that trapper, that it may not befit an officer of the States to meddle with. Go, while your road is open.”

“The man may be giving you honest counsel, and that which it concerns you all to hearken to,” observed the old captive, who seemed in no uneasiness at the extraordinary condition in which he found himself. “The Siouxes are a numberless and bloody-minded race, and no one can say how long it may be, afore they will be out again on the scent of revenge. Therefore I say to you, go, also; and take especial heed, in crossing the bottoms, that you get not entangled again in the fires, for the honest hunters often burn the grass at this season, in order that the buffaloes may find a sweeter and a greener pasturage in the spring.”

“I should forget not only my gratitude, but my duty to the laws, were I to leave this prisoner in your hands, even by his own consent, without knowing the nature of his crime, in which we may have all been his innocent accessaries.”

“Will it satisfy you to know, that he merits all he will receive?”

“It will at least change my opinion of his character.”

“Look then at this,” said Ishmael, placing before the eyes of the Captain the bullet that had been found about the person of the dead Asa; “with this morsel of lead did he lay low as fine a boy as ever gave joy to a parent's eyes!”

“I cannot believe that he has done this deed, unless in self-defence, or on some justifiable provocation. That he knew of the death of your son, I confess, for he pointed out the brake in which the body lay, but that he has wrongfully taken his life, nothing but his own acknowledgment shall persuade me to believe.”

“I have lived long,” commenced the trapper, who found, by the general pause, that he was expected to vindicate himself from the heavy imputation, “and much evil have I seen in my day. Many are the prowling bears and leaping panthers that I have met, fighting for the morsel which has been thrown in their way; and many are the reasoning men, that I have looked on striving against each other unto death, in order that human madness might also have its hour. For myself, I hope, there is no boasting in saying, that though my hand has been needed in putting down wickedness and oppression, it has never struck a blow of which its owner will be ashamed to hear, at a reckoning that shall be far mightier than this.”

“If my father has taken life from one of his tribe,” said the young Pawnee, whose quick eye had read the meaning of what was

passing, in the bullet and in the countenances of the others, "let him give himself up to the friends of the dead, like a warrior. He is too just to need thongs to lead him to judgment."

"Boy, I hope you do me justice. If I had done the foul deed, with which they charge me, I should have manhood enough to come and offer my head to the blow of punishment, as all good and honest Red-men do the same." Then giving his anxious Indian friend a look, to re-assure him of his innocence, he turned to the rest of his attentive and interested listeners, as he continued in English, "I have a short story to tell, and he that believes it will believe the truth, and he that disbelieves it will only lead himself astray, and perhaps his neighbour too. We were all out-lying about your camp, friend squatter, as by this time you may begin to suspect, when we found that it contained a wronged and imprisoned lady, with intentions neither more honest nor dishonest than to set her free, as in nature and justice she had a right to be. Seeing that I was more skilled in scouting than the others, while they lay back in the cover, I was sent upon the plain, on the business of the reconnoitrings. You little thought that one was so nigh, who saw into all the circumventions of your hunt; but there was I, sometimes flat behind a bush or a tuft of grass, sometimes rolling down a hill into a bottom, and little did you dream that your motions were watched, as the panther watches the drinking deer. Lord, squatter, when I was a man in the pride and strength of my days, I have looked in at the tent door of the enemy, and they sleeping, ay, and dreaming too, of being at home and in peace! I wish there was time to give you the partic—"

"Proceed with your explanation," interrupted Middleton.

"Ah! and a bloody and wicked sight it was. There I lay in a low bed of grass, as two of the hunters came nigh each other. Their meeting was not cordial, nor such as men, who meet in a desert, should give each other; but I thought they would have parted in peace, until I saw one put his rifle to the other's back, and do what I call a treacherous and sinful murder. It was a noble and a manly youth, that boy—Though the powder burnt his coat, he stood the shock for more than a minute, before he fell. Then was he brought to his knees, and a desperate and manful fight he made to the brake, like a wounded bear seeking a cover!"

"And why, in the name of heavenly justice, did you conceal this?" cried Middleton.

"What! think you, Captain, that a man, who has spent more than threescore years in the wilderness, has not learned the virtue of discretion. What red warrior runs to tell the sights he has seen, until a fitting time? I took the Doctor to the place, in order to see whether his skill might not come in use; and our friend, the bee-hunter, being in company, was knowing to the fact that the bushes held the body."

"Ay; it ar' true," said Paul; "but not knowing what private reasons might make the old trapper wish to hush the matter up, I said as little about the thing as possible, which was just nothing at all."

"And who was the perpetrator of this deed?" demanded Middleton.

"If by perpetrator you mean him who did the act, yonder stands the man; and a shame, and a disgrace is it to our race, that he is of the blood and family of the dead."

"He lies! he lies!" shrieked Abiram. "I did no murder; I gave but blow for blow."

The voice of Ishmael was deep, and even awful, as he answered—

"It is enough. Let the old man go. Boys, put the brother of your mother in his place."

"Touch me not!" cried Abiram. "I'll call on God to curse you if you touch me!"

The wild and disordered gleam of his eye, at first induced the young men to arrest their steps; but when Abner, older and more resolute than the rest, advanced full upon him, with a countenance that bespoke the hostile state of his mind, the affrighted criminal turned, and, making an abortive effort to fly, fell with his face to the earth, to all appearance perfectly dead. Amid the low exclamations of horror which succeeded, Ishmael made a gesture which commanded his sons to bear the body into the tent.

"Now," he said, turning to those who were strangers in his camp, "nothing is left to be done, but for each to go his own road. I wish you all well; and to you, Ellen, though you may not prize the gift, I say, God bless you!"

Middleton, awe-struck by what he believed a manifest judgment of Heaven, made no further resistance, but prepared to depart. The arrangements were brief, and soon completed. When they were all ready, they took a short and silent leave of the squatter and his family; and then the whole of the singularly constituted party were seen slowly and silently following the victorious Pawnee towards his distant villages.

## CHAPTER XXXII

And I beseech you,  
wrest once the law, to your authority:  
To do a great right, do a little wrong.  
—Shakspeare.

Ishmael awaited long and patiently for the motley train of Hard-Heart to disappear. When his scout reported that the last straggler of the Indians, who had joined their chief so soon as he was at such a distance from the encampment as to excite no jealousy by their numbers, had gone behind the most distant swell of the prairie, he gave forth the order to strike his tents. The cattle were already in the gears, and the movables were soon transferred to their usual places in the different vehicles. When all these arrangements were completed, the little wagon, which had so long been the tenement of Inez, was drawn before the tent, into which the insensible body of the kidnapper had been borne, and preparations were evidently made for the reception of another prisoner. Then it was, as Abiram appeared, pale, terrified, and tottering beneath a load of detected guilt, that the younger members of the family were first apprised that he still belonged to the class of the living. A general and superstitious impression had spread among them, that his crime had been visited by a terrible retribution from Heaven; and they now gazed at him, as at a being who belonged rather to another world, than as a mortal, who, like themselves, had still to endure the last agony before the great link of human existence could be broken. The criminal himself appeared to be in a state, in which the most sensitive and startling terror was singularly combined with total physical apathy. The truth was, that while his person had been numbed by the shock, his susceptibility to apprehension kept his agitated mind in unrelieved distress. When he found himself in the open air, he looked about him, in order to gather, if possible, some evidences of his future fate, from the countenances of those gathered round. Seeing every where grave but composed features, and meeting in no eye any expression that threatened immediate violence, the miserable man began to revive; and, by the time he was seated in the wagon, his artful faculties were beginning to plot the expedients of parrying the just resentment of his kinsmen, or, if these should fail him, the means of escaping from a punishment that his forebodings told him would be terrible.

Throughout the whole of these preparations Ishmael rarely spoke. A gesture, or a glance of the eye, served to indicate his pleasure to his sons, and with these simple methods of communication, all parties appeared content. When the signal was made to proceed, the squatter threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and his axe across his shoulder, taking the lead as usual. Esther buried herself in the wagon which contained her daughters; the young men took their customary places among the cattle, or nigh the teams, and the whole proceeded, at their ordinary, dull, but unremitted gait.

For the first time, in many a day, the squatter turned his back towards the setting sun. The route he held was in the direction of the settled country, and the manner in which he moved sufficed to tell his children, who had learned to read their father's determinations in his mien, that their journey on the prairie was shortly to have an end. Still nothing else transpired for hours, that might denote the existence of any sudden, or violent, revolution in the purposes or feelings of Ishmael. During all that time he marched alone, keeping a few hundred rods in front of his teams, seldom giving any sign of extraordinary excitement. Once or twice, indeed, his huge figure was seen standing on the summit of some distant swell, with the head bent towards the earth, as he leaned on his rifle; but then these moments of intense thought were rare, and of short continuance. The train had long thrown its shadows towards the east, before any material alteration was made in the disposition of their march. Water-courses were waded, plains were passed, and rolling ascents risen and descended, without producing the smallest change. Long practised in the difficulties of that peculiar species of travelling in which he was engaged, the squatter avoided the more impracticable obstacles of their route by a sort of instinct, invariably inclining to the right or left in season, as the formation of the land, the presence of trees, or the signs of rivers forewarned him of the necessity of such movements.

At length the hour arrived when charity to man and beast required a temporary suspension of labour. Ishmael chose the required spot with his customary sagacity. The regular formation of the country, such as it has been described in the earlier pages of our book, had long been interrupted by a more unequal and broken surface. There were, it is true, in general, the same wide and empty wastes, the same rich and extensive bottoms, and that wild and singular combination of swelling fields and of nakedness, which gives that region the appearance of an ancient country, incomprehensibly stripped of its people and their dwellings. But these distinguishing features of the rolling prairies had long been interrupted by irregular hillocks, occasional masses of rock, and broad belts of forest.

Ishmael chose a spring, that broke out of the base of a rock some forty or fifty feet in elevation, as a place well suited to the wants of his herds. The water moistened a small swale that lay beneath the spot, which yielded, in return for the fecund gift, a scanty growth of grass. A solitary willow had taken root in the alluvion, and profiting by its exclusive possession of the soil, the tree had sent up its stem far above the crest of the adjacent rock, whose peaked summit had once been shadowed by its branches. But its loveliness had gone with the mysterious principle of life. As if in mockery of the meagre show of verdure that the spot exhibited, it remained a noble and solemn monument of former fertility. The larger, ragged, and fantastic branches still obtruded themselves abroad, while the white and hoary trunk stood naked and tempest-riven. Not a leaf, nor a sign of vegetation, was to be seen about it. In all things it proclaimed the frailty of existence, and the fulfilment of time.

Here Ishmael, after making the customary signal for the train to approach, threw his vast frame upon the earth, and seemed to muse on the deep responsibility of his present situation. His sons were not long in arriving; for the cattle no sooner scented the food and water than they quickened their pace, and then succeeded the usual bustle and avocations of a halt.

The impression made by the scene of that morning was not so deep, or lasting, on the children of Ishmael and Esther, as to induce them to forget the wants of nature. But while the sons were searching among their stores, for something substantial to appease their hunger, and the younger fry were wrangling about their simple dishes, the parents of the unnurtured family were differently employed.

When the squatter saw that all, even to the reviving Abiram, were busy in administering to their appetites, he gave his downcast partner a glance of his eye, and withdrew towards a distant roll of the land, which bounded the view towards the east. The meeting of the pair, in this naked spot, was like an interview held above the grave of their murdered son. Ishmael signed to his wife to take a seat beside him on a fragment of rock, and then followed a space, during which neither seemed disposed to speak.

"We have journeyed together long, through good and bad," Ishmael at length commenced: "much have we had to try us, and some bitter cups have we been made to swallow, my woman; but nothing like this has ever before lain in my path."

"It is a heavy cross for a poor, misguided, and sinful woman to bear!" returned Esther, bowing her head to her knees, and partly concealing her face in her dress. "A heavy and a burdensome weight is this to be laid upon the shoulders of a sister and a mother!"

"Ay; therein lies the hardship of the case. I had brought my mind to the punishment of that houseless trapper, with no great strivings, for the man had done me few favours, and God forgive me if I suspected him wrongfully of much evil! This is, however, bringing shame in at one door of my cabin, in order to drive it out at the other. But shall a son of mine be murdered, and he who did it go at large?—the boy would never rest!"

"Oh, Ishmael, we pushed the matter far. Had little been said, who would have been the wiser? Our consciences might then have been quiet."

"Eest'er," said the husband, turning on her a reproachful but still a dull regard, "the hour has been, my woman, when you thought another hand had done this wickedness."

"I did, I did the Lord gave me the feeling, as a punishment for my sins! but his mercy was not slow in lifting the veil; I looked into the book, Ishmael, and there I found the words of comfort."

"Have you that book at hand, woman; it may happen to advise in such a dreary business."

Esther fumbled in her pocket, and was not long in producing the fragment of a Bible, which had been thumbed and smoke-dried till the print was nearly illegible. It was the only article, in the nature of a book, that was to be found among the chattels of the squatter, and it had been preserved by his wife, as a melancholy relic of more prosperous, and possibly of more innocent, days. She had long been in the habit of resorting to it, under the pressure of such circumstances as were palpably beyond human redress, though her spirit and resolution rarely needed support under those that admitted of reparation through any of the ordinary means of reprisal. In this manner Esther had made a sort of convenient ally of the word of God; rarely troubling it for counsel, however, except when her own incompetency to avert an evil was too apparent to be disputed. We shall leave casuists to determine how far she resembled any other believers in this particular, and proceed directly with the matter before us.

"There are many awful passages in these pages, Ishmael," she said, when the volume was opened, and the leaves were slowly turning under her finger, "and some there ar' that teach the rules of punishment."

Her husband made a gesture for her to find one of those brief rules of conduct, which have been received among all Christian nations as the direct mandates of the Creator, and which have been found so just, that even they, who deny their high authority, admit their wisdom. Ishmael listened with grave attention, as his companion read all those verses, which her memory suggested, and which were thought applicable to the situation in which they found themselves. He made her show him the words, which he regarded with a sort of strange reverence. A resolution once taken was usually irrevocable, in one who was moved with so much difficulty. He put his hand upon the book, and closed the pages himself, as much as to apprise his wife that he was satisfied. Esther, who so well knew his character, trembled at the action, and casting a glance at his steady eye, she said—

"And yet, Ishmael, my blood, and the blood of my children, is in his veins, cannot mercy be shown?"

"Woman," he answered sternly, "when we believed that miserable old trapper had done this deed, nothing was said of mercy!"

Esther made no reply, but folding her arms upon her breast, she sat silent and thoughtful for many minutes. Then she once more turned her anxious gaze upon the countenance of her husband, where she found all passion and care apparently buried in the coldest apathy. Satisfied now, that the fate of her brother was sealed, and possibly conscious how well he merited the punishment that was meditated, she no longer thought of mediation. No more words passed between them. Their eyes met for an instant, and then both arose and walked in profound silence towards the encampment.

The squatter found his children expecting his return in the usual listless manner with which they awaited all coming events. The cattle were already herded, and the horses in their gears, in readiness to proceed, so soon as he should indicate that such was his pleasure. The children were already in their proper vehicle, and, in short, nothing delayed the departure but the absence of the parents of the wild brood.

"Abner," said the father, with the deliberation with which all his proceedings were characterised, "take the brother of your mother from the wagon, and let him stand on the 'arth."

Abiram issued from his place of concealment, trembling, it is true, but far from destitute of hopes, as to his final success in appeasing the just resentment of his kinsman. After throwing a glance around him, with the vain wish of finding a single countenance in which he might detect a solitary gleam of sympathy, he endeavoured to smother those apprehensions, that were by this time reviving in their original violence, by forcing a sort of friendly communication between himself and the squatter—

"The beasts are getting jaded, brother," he said, "and as we have made so good a march already, is it not time to camp. To my eye you may go far, before a better place than this is found to pass the night in."

"Tis well you like it. Your tarry here ar' likely to be long. My sons, draw nigh and listen. Abiram White," he added, lifting his cap, and speaking with a solemnity and steadiness, that rendered even his dull mien imposing, "you have slain my first-born, and according to the laws of God and man must you die!"

The kidnapper started at this terrible and sudden sentence, with the terror that one would exhibit who unexpectedly found himself in the grasp of a monster, from whose power there was no retreat. Although filled with the most serious forebodings of what might be his

lot, his courage had not been equal to look his danger in the face, and with the deceitful consolation, with which timid tempers are apt to conceal their desperate condition from themselves, he had rather courted a treacherous relief in his cunning, than prepared himself for the worst.

"Die!" he repeated, in a voice that scarcely issued from his chest; "a man is surely safe among his kinsmen!"

"So thought my boy," returned the squatter, motioning for the team, that contained his wife and the girls, to proceed, as he very coolly examined the priming of his piece. "By the rifle did you destroy my son; it is fit and just that you meet your end by the same weapon."

Abiram stared about him with a gaze that bespoke an unsettled reason. He even laughed, as if he would not only persuade himself but others that what he heard was some pleasantry, intended to try his nerves. But nowhere did his frightful merriment meet with an answering echo. All around was solemn and still. The visages of his nephews were excited, but cold towards him, and that of his former confederate frightfully determined. This very steadiness of mien was a thousand times more alarming and hopeless than any violence could have proved. The latter might possibly have touched his spirit and awakened resistance, but the former threw him entirely on the feeble resources of himself.

"Brother," he said, in a hurried, unnatural whisper, "did I hear you?"

"My words are plain, Abiram White: thou hast done murder, and for the same must thou die!"

"Esther! sister, sister, will you leave me! Oh sister! do you hear my call?"

"I hear one speak from the grave!" returned the husky tones of Esther, as the wagon passed the spot where the criminal stood. "It is the voice of my firstborn, calling aloud for justice! God have mercy, God have mercy, on your soul!"

The team slowly pursued its route, and the deserted Abiram now found himself deprived of the smallest vestige of hope. Still he could not summon fortitude to meet his death, and had not his limbs refused to aid him, he would yet have attempted to fly. Then, by a sudden revolution from hope to utter despair, he fell upon his knees, and commenced a prayer, in which cries for mercy to God and to his kinsman were wildly and blasphemously mingled. The sons of Ishmael turned away in horror at the disgusting spectacle, and even the stern nature of the squatter began to bend before so abject misery.

"May that, which you ask of Him, be granted," he said; "but a father can never forget a murdered child."

He was answered by the most humble appeals for time. A week, a day, an hour, were each implored, with an earnestness commensurate to the value they receive, when a whole life is compressed into their short duration. The squatter was troubled, and at length he yielded in part to the petitions of the criminal. His final purpose was not altered, though he changed the means. "Abner," he said, "mount the rock, and look on every side, that we may be sure none are nigh."

While his nephew was obeying this order, gleams of reviving hope were seen shooting across the quivering features of the kidnapper. The report was favourable, nothing having life, the retiring teams excepted, was to be seen. A messenger was, however, coming from the latter, in great apparent haste. Ishmael awaited its arrival. He received from the hands of one of his wondering and frightened girls a fragment of that book, which Esther had preserved with so much care. The squatter beckoned the child away, and placed the leaves in the hands of the criminal.

"Eest'er has sent you this," he said, "that, in your last moments, you may remember God."

"Bless her, bless her! a good and kind sister has she been to me. But time must be given, that I may read; time, my brother, time!"

"Time shall not be wanting. You shall be your own executioner, and this miserable office shall pass away from my hands."

Ishmael proceeded to put his new resolution in force. The immediate apprehensions of the kidnapper were quieted, by an assurance that he might yet live for days, though his punishment was inevitable. A reprieve, to one abject and wretched as Abiram, temporarily produced the same effects as a pardon. He was even foremost in assisting in the appalling arrangements, and of all the actors, in that solemn tragedy, his voice alone was facetious and jocular.

A thin shelf of the rock projected beneath one of the ragged arms of the willow. It was many feet from the ground, and admirably adapted to the purpose which, in fact, its appearance had suggested. On this little platform the criminal was placed, his arms bound at the elbows behind his back, beyond the possibility of liberation, with a proper cord leading from his neck to the limb of the tree. The latter was so placed, that when suspended the body could find no foot-hold. The fragment of the Bible was placed in his hands, and he was left to seek his consolation as he might from its pages.

"And now, Abiram White," said the squatter, when his sons had descended from completing this arrangement, "I give you a last and solemn asking. Death is before you in two shapes. With this rifle can your misery be cut short, or by that cord, sooner or later, must you meet your end."

"Let me yet live! Oh, Ishmael, you know not how sweet life is, when the last moment draws so nigh!"

"'Tis done," said the squatter, motioning for his assistants to follow the herds and teams. "And now, miserable man, that it may prove a consolation to your end, I forgive you my wrongs, and leave you to your God."

Ishmael turned and pursued his way across the plain, at his ordinary sluggish and ponderous gait. Though his head was bent a little towards the earth, his inactive mind did not prompt him to cast a look behind. Once, indeed, he thought he heard his name called, in tones that were a little smothered, but they failed to make him pause.

At the spot where he and Esther had conferred, he reached the boundary of the visible horizon from the rock. Here he stopped, and ventured a glance in the direction of the place he had just quitted. The sun was near dipping into the plains beyond, and its last rays lighted the naked branches of the willow. He saw the ragged outline of the whole drawn against the glowing heavens, and he even traced the still upright form of the being he had left to his misery. Turning the roll of the swell, he proceeded with the feelings of one, who had been suddenly and violently separated from a recent confederate, for ever.

Within a mile, the squatter overtook his teams. His sons had found a place suited to the encampment for the night, and merely awaited his approach to confirm their choice. Few words were necessary to express his acquiescence. Every thing passed in a silence more general and remarkable than ever. The chidings of Esther were not heard among her young, or if heard, they were more in the tones of softened admonition, than in her usual, upbraiding, key.

No questions nor explanations passed between the husband and his wife. It was only as the latter was about to withdraw among her children, for the night, that the former saw her taking a furtive look at the pan of his rifle. Ishmael bade his sons seek their rest, announcing his intention to look to the safety of the camp in person. When all was still, he walked out upon the prairie, with a sort of sensation that he found his breathing among the tents too straitened. The night was well adapted to heighten the feelings, which had been created by the events of the day.

The wind had risen with the moon, and it was occasionally sweeping over the plain, in a manner that made it not difficult for the sentinel to imagine strange and unearthly sounds were mingling in the blasts. Yielding to the extraordinary impulses of which he was the subject, he cast a glance around, to see that all were slumbering in security, and then he strayed towards the swell of land already mentioned. Here the squatter found himself at a point that commanded a view to the east and to the west. Light fleecy clouds were driving before the moon, which was cold and watery though there were moments, when its placid rays were shed from clear blue fields, seeming to soften objects to its own mild loveliness.

For the first time, in a life of so much wild adventure, Ishmael felt a keen sense of solitude. The naked prairies began to assume the forms of illimitable and dreary wastes and the rushing of the wind sounded like the whisperings of the dead. It was not long before he thought a shriek was borne past him on a blast. It did not sound like a call from earth but it swept frightfully through the upper air mingled with the hoarse accompaniment of the wind. The teeth of the squatter were compressed, and his huge hand grasped the rifle, as if it would crush the metal. Then came a lull, a fresher blast, and a cry of horror that seemed to have been uttered at the very portals of his ears. A sort of echo burst involuntarily from his own lips, as men shout under unnatural excitement, and throwing his rifle across his shoulder he proceeded towards the rock with the strides of a giant.

It was not often that the blood of Ishmael moved at the rate with which the fluid circulates in the veins of ordinary men; but now he felt it ready to gush from every pore in his body. The animal was aroused, in his most latent energies. Ever as he advanced he heard those shrieks, which sometimes seemed ringing among the clouds, and sometimes passed so nigh, as to appear to brush the earth. At length there came a cry, in which there could be no delusion, or to which the imagination could lend no horror. It appeared to fill each cranny of the air, as the visible horizon is often charged to fullness by one dazzling flash of the electric fluid. The name of God was distinctly audible, but it was awfully and blasphemously blended with sounds that may not be repeated. The squatter stopped, and for a moment he covered his ears with his hands. When he withdrew the latter, a low and husky voice at his elbow asked in smothered tones

—  
“Ishmael, my man, heard ye nothing?”

“Hist,” returned the husband, laying a powerful arm on Esther, without manifesting the smallest surprise at the unlooked-for presence of his wife. “Hist, woman! if you have the fear of Heaven, be still!”

A profound silence succeeded. Though the wind rose and fell as before, its rushing was no longer mingled with those fearful cries. The sounds were imposing and solemn, but it was the solemnity and majesty of nature.

“Let us go on,” said Esther; “all is hushed.”

“Woman, what has brought you here?” demanded her husband, whose blood had returned into its former channels, and whose thoughts had already lost a portion of their excitement.

“Ishmael, he murdered our first-born; but it is not meet that the son of my mother should lie upon the ground, like the carrion of a dog!”

“Follow,” returned the squatter, again grasping his rifle, and striding towards the rock. The distance was still considerable; and their approach, as they drew nigh the place of execution, was moderated by awe. Many minutes had passed, before they reached a spot where they might distinguish the outlines of the dusky objects.

“Where have you put the body?” whispered Esther. “See, here are pick and spade, that a brother of mine may sleep in the bosom of the earth!”

The moon broke from behind a mass of clouds, and the eye of the woman was enabled to follow the finger of Ishmael. It pointed to a human form swinging in the wind, beneath the ragged and shining arm of the willow. Esther bent her head and veiled her eyes from the sight. But Ishmael drew nigher, and long contemplated his work in awe, though not in compunction. The leaves of the sacred book were scattered on the ground, and even a fragment of the shelf had been displaced by the kidnapper in his agony. But all was now in the stillness of death. The grim and convulsed countenance of the victim was at times brought full into the light of the moon, and again as the wind lulled, the fatal rope drew a dark line across its bright disk. The squatter raised his rifle, with extreme care, and fired. The cord was cut and the body came lumbering to the earth a heavy and insensible mass.

Until now Esther had not moved nor spoken. But her hand was not slow to assist in the labour of the hour. The grave was soon dug. It was instantly made to receive its miserable tenant. As the lifeless form descended, Esther, who sustained the head, looked up into the face of her husband with an expression of anguish, and said—

“Ishmael, my man, it is very terrible! I cannot kiss the corpse of my father’s child!”

The squatter laid his broad hand on the bosom of the dead, and said—

“Abiram White, we all have need of mercy; from my soul do I forgive you! May God in Heaven have pity on your sins!”

The woman bowed her face and imprinted her lips long and fervently on the pallid forehead of her brother. After this came the falling clods and all the solemn sounds of filling a grave. Esther lingered on her knees, and Ishmael stood uncovered while the woman

muttered a prayer. All was then finished.

On the following morning the teams and herds of the squatter were seen pursuing their course towards the settlements. As they approached the confines of society the train was blended among a thousand others. Though some of the numerous descendants of this peculiar pair were reclaimed from their lawless and semi-barbarous lives, the principals of the family, themselves, were never heard of more.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

—No leave take I; for I will ride  
As far as land will let me, by your side.  
—Shakspeare.

The passage of the Pawnee to his village was interrupted by no scene of violence. His vengeance had been as complete as it was summary. Not even a solitary scout of the Siouxes was left on the hunting grounds he was obliged to traverse, and of course the journey of Middleton's party was as peaceful as if made in the bosom of the States. The marches were timed to meet the weakness of the females. In short, the victors seemed to have lost every trace of ferocity with their success, and appeared disposed to consult the most trifling of the wants of that engrossing people, who were daily encroaching on their rights, and reducing the Red-men of the west, from their state of proud independence to the condition of fugitives and wanderers.

Our limits will not permit a detail of the triumphal entry of the conquerors. The exultation of the tribe was proportioned to its previous despondency. Mothers boasted of the honourable deaths of their sons; wives proclaimed the honour and pointed to the scars of their husbands, and Indian girls rewarded the young braves with songs of triumph. The trophies of their fallen enemies were exhibited, as conquered standards are displayed in more civilised regions. The deeds of former warriors were recounted by the aged men, and declared to be eclipsed by the glory of this victory. While Hard-Heart himself, so distinguished for his exploits from boyhood to that hour, was unanimously proclaimed and re-proclaimed the worthiest chief and the stoutest brave that the Wahcondah had ever bestowed on his most favoured children, the Pawnees of the Loup.

Notwithstanding the comparative security in which Middleton found his recovered treasure, he was not sorry to see his faithful and sturdy artillerists standing among the throng, as he entered in the wild train, and lifting their voices, in a martial shout, to greet his return. The presence of this force, small as it was, removed every shadow of uneasiness from his mind. It made him master of his movements, gave him dignity and importance in the eyes of his new friends, and would enable him to overcome the difficulties of the wide region which still lay between the village of the Pawnees and the nearest fortress of his countrymen. A lodge was yielded to the exclusive possession of Inez and Ellen; and even Paul, when he saw an armed sentinel in the uniform of the States, pacing before its entrance, was content to stray among the dwellings of the "Red-skins," prying with but little reserve into their domestic economy, commenting sometimes jocularly, sometimes gravely, and always freely, on their different expedients, or endeavouring to make the wondering housewives comprehend his quaint explanations of what he conceived to be the better customs of the whites.

This enquiring and troublesome spirit found no imitators among the Indians. The delicacy and reserve of Hard-Heart were communicated to his people. When every attention, that could be suggested by their simple manners and narrow wants, had been fulfilled, no intrusive foot presumed to approach the cabins devoted to the service of the strangers. They were left to seek their repose in the manner which most comported with their habits and inclinations. The songs and rejoicings of the tribe, however, ran far into the night, during the deepest hours of which, the voice of more than one warrior was heard, recounting from the top of his lodge, the deeds of his people and the glory of their triumphs.

Every thing having life, notwithstanding the excesses of the night, was abroad with the appearance of the sun. The expression of exultation, which had so lately been seen on every countenance, was now changed to one better suited to the feeling of the moment. It was understood by all, that the Pale-faces, who had befriended their chief were about to take their final leave of the tribe. The soldiers of Middleton, in anticipation of his arrival, had bargained with an unsuccessful trader for the use of his boat, which lay in the stream ready to receive its cargo, and nothing remained to complete the arrangements for the long journey.

Middleton did not see this moment arrive entirely without distrust. The admiration with which Hard-Heart regarded Inez, had not escaped his jealous eye, any more than had the lawless wishes of Mahtoree. He knew the consummate manner in which a savage could conceal his designs, and he felt that it would be a culpable weakness to be unprepared for the worst. Secret instructions were therefore given to his men, while the preparations they made were properly masked behind the show of military parade, with which it was intended to signalise their departure.

The conscience of the young soldier reproached him, when he saw the whole tribe accompanying his party to the margin of the stream, with unarmed hands and sorrowful countenances. They gathered in a circle around the strangers and their chief, and became not only peaceful, but highly interested observers of what was passing. As it was evident that Hard-Heart intended to speak, the former stopped, and manifested their readiness to listen, the trapper performing the office of interpreter. Then the young chief addressed his people, in the usual metaphorical language of an Indian. He commenced by alluding to the antiquity and renown of his own nation. He spoke of their successes in the hunts and on the war-path; of the manner in which they had always known how to defend their rights and to chastise their enemies. After he had said enough to manifest his respect for the greatness of the Loups, and to satisfy the pride of the listeners, he made a sudden transition to the race of whom the strangers were members. He compared their countless numbers to the flights of migratory birds in the season of blossoms, or in the fall of the year. With a delicacy, that none know better how to practise than an Indian warrior, he made no direct mention of the rapacious temper, that so many of them had betrayed, in their dealings with the Red-men. Feeling that the sentiment of distrust was strongly engrafted in the tempers of his tribe, he rather endeavoured to soothe any just resentment they might entertain, by indirect excuses and apologies. He reminded the listeners that even the Pawnee Loups had been obliged to chase many unworthy individuals from their villages. The Wahcondah sometimes veiled his countenance from a Red-man. No doubt the Great Spirit of the Pale-faces often looked darkly on his children. Such as were abandoned to the worker of evil could never be brave or virtuous, let the colour of the skin be what it might. He bade his young men look at the hands of the Big-knives. They were not empty, like those of hungry beggars. Neither were they filled with goods, like those of knavish traders. They



were, like themselves, warriors, and they carried arms which they knew well how to use—they were worthy to be called brothers!

Then he directed the attention of all to the chief of the strangers. He was a son of their great white father. He had not come upon the prairies to frighten the buffaloes from their pastures, or to seek the game of the Indians. Wicked men had robbed him of one of his wives; no doubt she was the most obedient, the meekest, the loveliest of them all. They had only to open their eyes to see that his words must be true. Now, that the white chief had found his wife, he was about to return to his own people in peace. He would tell them that the Pawnees were just, and there would be a line of wampum between the two nations. Let all his people wish the strangers a safe return to their towns. The warriors of the Loups knew both how to receive their enemies, and how to clear the briars from the path of their friends.

The heart of Middleton beat quick, as the young partisan[\*] alluded to the charms of Inez, and for an instant he cast an impatient glance at his little line of artillerists; but the chief from that moment appeared to forget he had ever seen so fair a being. His feelings, if he had any on the subject, were veiled behind the cold mask of Indian self-denial. He took each warrior by the hand, not forgetting the meanest soldier, but his cold and collected eye never wandered, for an instant, towards either of the females. Arrangements had been made for their comfort, with a prodigality and care that had not failed to excite some surprise in his young men, but in no other particular did he shock their manly pride, by betraying any solicitude in behalf of the weaker sex.

[\*] The Americans and the Indians have adopted several words, which each believe peculiar to the language of the others. Thus "squaw," "papoose," or child, wigwam, &c. &c., though it is doubtful whether they belonged at all to any Indian dialect, are much used by both white and red men in their intercourse. Many words are derived from the French, in this species of prairie nomaic. Partisan, brave, &c. are of the number.

The leave-taking was general and imposing. Each male Pawnee was sedulous to omit no one of the strange warriors in his attentions, and of course the ceremony occupied some time. The only exception, and that was not general, was in the case of Dr. Battius. Not a few of the young men, it is true, were indifferent about lavishing civilities on one of so doubtful a profession, but the worthy naturalist found some consolation in the more matured politeness of the old men, who had inferred, that though not of much use in war, the medicine of the Big-knives might possibly be made serviceable in peace.

When all of Middleton's party had embarked, the trapper lifted a small bundle, which had lain at his feet during the previous proceedings, and whistling Hector to his side, he was the last to take his seat. The artillerists gave the usual cheers, which were answered by a shout from the tribe, and then the boat was shoved into the current, and began to glide swiftly down its stream.

A long and a musing, if not a melancholy, silence succeeded this departure. It was first broken by the trapper, whose regret was not the least visible in his dejected and sorrowful eye—

"They are a valiant and an honest tribe," he said; "that will I say boldly in their favour; and second only do I take them to be to that once mighty but now scattered people, the Delawares of the Hills. Ah's me, Captain, if you had seen as much good and evil as I have seen in these nations of Red-skins, you would know of how much value was a brave and simple-minded warrior. I know that some are to be found, who both think and say that an Indian is but little better than the beasts of these naked plains. But it is needful to be honest in one's self, to be a fitting judge of honesty in others. No doubt, no doubt they know their enemies, and little do they care to show to such any great confidence, or love."

"It is the way of man," returned the Captain; "and it is probable they are not wanting in any of his natural qualities."

"No, no; it is little that they want, that natur' has had to give. But as little does he know of the temper of a Red-skin, who has seen but one Indian, or one tribe, as he knows of the colour of feathers who has only looked upon a crow. Now, friend steersman, just give the boat a sheer towards yonder, low, sandy point, and a favour will be granted at a short asking."

"For what?" demanded Middleton; "we are now in the swiftest of the current, and by drawing to the shore we shall lose the force of the stream."

"Your tarry will not be long," returned the old man, applying his own hand to the execution of that which he had requested. The oarsmen had seen enough of his influence, with their leader, not to dispute his wishes, and before time was given for further discussion on the subject, the bow of the boat had touched the land.

"Captain," resumed the other, untying his little wallet with great deliberation, and even in a manner to show he found satisfaction in the delay, "I wish to offer you a small matter of trade. No great bargain, mayhap; but still the best that one, of whose hand the skill of the rifle has taken leave, and who has become no better than a miserable trapper, can offer before we part."

"Part!" was echoed from every mouth, among those who had so recently shared his dangers, and profited by his care.

"What the devil, old trapper, do you mean to foot it to the settlements, when here is a boat that will float the distance in half the time, that the jackass, the Doctor has given the Pawnee, could trot along the same."

"Settlements, boy! It is long sin' I took my leave of the waste and wickedness of the settlements and the villages. If I live in a clearing, here, it is one of the Lord's making, and I have no hard thoughts on the matter; but never again shall I be seen running wilfully into the danger of immoralities."

"I had not thought of parting," answered Middleton, endeavouring to seek some relief from the uneasiness he felt, by turning his eyes on the sympathising countenances of his friends; "on the contrary, I had hoped and believed that you would have accompanied us below, where I give you a sacred pledge, nothing shall be wanting to make your days comfortable."

"Yes, lad, yes; you would do your endeavours; but what are the strivings of man against the working of the devil! Ay, if kind offers and good wishes could have done the thing, I might have been a congress man, or perhaps a governor, years ago. Your grand'ther wished the same, and there are them still lying in the Otsego mountains, as I hope, who would gladly have given me a palace for my dwelling. But what are riches without content! My time must now be short, at any rate, and I hope it's no mighty sin for one, who has acted his part honestly near ninety winters and summers, to wish to pass the few hours that remain in comfort. If you think I have done

wrong in coming thus far to quit you again, Captain, I will own the reason of the act, without shame or backwardness. Though I have seen so much of the wilderness, it is not to be gainsayed, that my feelings, as well as my skin, are white. Now it would not be a fitting spectacle, that yonder Pawnee Loups should look upon the weakness of an old warrior, if weakness he should happen to show in parting for ever from those he has reason to love, though he may not set his heart so strongly on them, as to wish to go into the settlements in their company."

"Harkee, old trapper," said Paul, clearing his throat with a desperate effort, as if determined to give his voice a clear exit; "I have just one bargain to make, since you talk of trading, which is neither more or less than this. I offer you, as my side of the business, one half of my shanty, nor do I much care if it be the biggest half; the sweetest and the purest honey that can be made of the wild locust; always enough to eat, with now and then a mouthful of venison, or, for that matter, a morsel of buffaloe's hump, seeing that I intend to push my acquaintance with the animal, and as good and as tidy cooking as can come from the hands of one like Ellen Wade, here, who will shortly be Nelly somebody-else, and altogether such general treatment as a decent man might be supposed to pay to his best friend, or for that matter, to his own father; in return for the same, you ar' to give us at odd moments some of your ancient traditions, perhaps a little wholesome advice on occasions, in small quantities at a time, and as much of your agreeable company as you please."

"It is well—it is well, boy," returned the old man, fumbling at his wallet; "honestly offered, and not unthankfully declined—but it cannot be; no, it can never be."

"Venerable venator," said Dr. Battius; "there are obligations, which every man owes to society and to human nature. It is time that you should return to your countrymen, to deliver up some of those stores of experimental knowledge that you have doubtless obtained by so long a sojourn in the wilds, which, however they may be corrupted by preconceived opinions, will prove acceptable bequests to those whom, as you say, you must shortly leave for ever."

"Friend physicianer," returned the trapper, looking the other steadily in the face, "as it would be no easy matter to judge of the temper of the rattler by considering the fashions of the moose, so it would be hard to speak of the usefulness of one man by thinking too much of the deeds of another. You have your gifts like others, I suppose, and little do I wish to disturb them. But as to me, the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker, and therefore do I consider it no harm to shut my ears to your invitation."

"It is enough," interrupted Middleton, "I have seen and heard so much of this extraordinary man, as to know that persuasions will not change his purpose. First we will hear your request, my friend, and then we will consider what may be best done for your advantage."

"It is a small matter, Captain," returned the old man, succeeding at length in opening his bundle. "A small and trifling matter is it, to what I once used to offer in the way of bargain; but then it is the best I have, and therein not to be despised. Here are the skins of four beavers, that I took, it might be a month afore we met, and here is another from a racoon, that is of no great matter to be sure, but which may serve to make weight atween us."

"And what do you propose to do with them?"

"I offer them in lawful barter. Them knaves the Siouxes, the Lord forgive me for ever believing it was the Konzas! have stolen the best of my traps, and driven me altogether to make-shift inventions, which might foretell a dreary winter for me, should my time stretch into another season. I wish you therefore to take the skins, and to offer them to some of the trappers you will not fail to meet below in exchange for a few traps, and to send the same into the Pawnee village in my name. Be careful to have my mark painted on them; a letter N, with a hound's ear, and the lock of a rifle. There is no Red-skin who will then dispute my right. For all which trouble I have little more to offer than my thanks, unless my friend, the bee-hunter here, will accept of the racoon, and take on himself the special charge of the whole matter."

"If I do, may I b—!" The mouth of Paul was stopped by the hand of Ellen, and he was obliged to swallow the rest of the sentence, which he did with a species of emotion that bore no slight resemblance to the process of strangulation.

"Well, well," returned the old man, meekly; "I hope there is no heavy offence in the offer. I know that the skin of a racoon is of small price, but then it was no mighty labour that I asked in return."

"You entirely mistake the meaning of our friend," interrupted Middleton, who observed, that the bee-hunter was looking in every direction but the right one, and that he was utterly unable to make his own vindication. "He did not mean to say that he declined the charge, but merely that he refused all compensation. It is unnecessary, however, to say more of this; it shall be my office to see that the debt we owe, is properly discharged, and that all your necessities shall be anticipated."

"Anan!" said the old man, looking up enquiringly into the other's face, as if to ask an explanation.

"It shall all be as you wish. Lay the skins with my baggage. We will bargain for you as for ourselves."

"Thankee, thankee, Captain; you grand'ther was of a free and generous mind. So much so, in truth, that those just people, the Delawares, called him the 'Openhand.' I wish, now, I was as I used to be, in order that I might send in the lady a few delicate martens for her tippets and overcoats, just to show you that I know how to give courtesy for courtesy. But do not expect the same, for I am too old to give a promise! It will all be just as the Lord shall see fit. I can offer you nothing else, for I haven't liv'd so long in the wilderness, not to know the scrupulous ways of a gentleman."

"Harkee, old trapper," cried the bee-hunter, striking his own hand into the open palm which the other had extended, with a report but little below the crack of a rifle, "I have just two things to say—Firstly, that the Captain has told you my meaning better than I can myself; and, secondly, if you want a skin, either for your private use or to send abroad, I have it at your service, and that is the skin of one Paul Hover."

The old man returned the grasp he received, and opened his mouth to the utmost, in his extraordinary, silent, laugh.

"You couldn't have given such a squeeze, boy, when the Teton squaws were about you with their knives! Ah! you are in your prime, and in your vigour and happiness, if honesty lies in your path." Then the expression of his rugged features suddenly changed to a look

of seriousness and thought. "Come hither, lad," he said, leading the bee-hunter by a button to the land, and speaking apart in a tone of admonition and confidence; "much has passed atween us on the pleasures and respectableness of a life in the woods, or on the borders. I do not now mean to say that all you have heard is not true, but different tempers call for different employments. You have taken to your bosom, there, a good and kind child, and it has become your duty to consider her, as well as yourself, in setting forth in life. You are a little given to skirting the settlements but, to my poor judgment, the girl would be more like a flourishing flower in the sun of a clearing, than in the winds of a prairie. Therefore forget any thing you may have heard from me, which is nevertheless true, and turn your mind on the ways of the inner country."

Paul could only answer with a squeeze, that would have brought tears from the eyes of most men, but which produced no other effect on the indurated muscles of the other, than to make him laugh and nod, as if he received the same as a pledge that the bee-hunter would remember his advice. The trapper then turned away from his rough but warm-hearted companion; and, having called Hector from the boat, he seemed anxious still to utter a few words more.

"Captain," he at length resumed, "I know when a poor man talks of credit, he deals in a delicate word, according to the fashions of the world; and when an old man talks of life, he speaks of that which he may never see; nevertheless there is one thing I will say, and that is not so much on my own behalf as on that of another person. Here is Hector, a good and faithful pup, that has long outlived the time of a dog; and, like his master, he looks more to comfort now, than to any deeds in running. But the creatur' has his feelings as well as a Christian. He has consorted latterly with his kinsman, there, in such a sort as to find great pleasure in his company, and I will acknowledge that it touches my feelings to part the pair so soon. If you will set a value on your hound, I will endeavour to send it to you in the spring, more especially should them same traps come safe to hand; or, if you dislike parting with the animal altogether, I will just ask you for his loan through the winter. I think I can see my pup will not last beyond that time, for I have judgment in these matters, since many is the friend, both hound and Red-skin, that I have seen depart in my day, though the Lord hath not yet seen fit to order his angels to sound forth my name."

"Take him, take him," cried Middleton; "take all, or any thing!"

The old man whistled the younger dog to the land; and then he proceeded to the final adieus. Little was said on either side. The trapper took each person solemnly by the hand, and uttered something friendly and kind to all. Middleton was perfectly speechless, and was driven to affect busying himself among the baggage. Paul whistled with all his might, and even Obed took his leave with an effort that bore the appearance of desperate philosophical resolution. When he had made the circuit of the whole, the old man, with his own hands, shoved the boat into the current, wishing God to speed them. Not a word was spoken, nor a stroke of the oar given, until the travellers had floated past a knoll that hid the trapper from their view. He was last seen standing on the low point, leaning on his rifle, with Hector crouched at his feet, and the younger dog frisking along the sands, in the playfulness of youth and vigour.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

—Methought, I heard a voice.

—Shakspeare.

The water-courses were at their height, and the boat went down the swift current like a bird. The passage proved prosperous and speedy. In less than a third of the time, that would have been necessary for the same journey by land, it was accomplished by the favour of those rapid rivers. Issuing from one stream into another, as the veins of the human body communicate with the larger channels of life, they soon entered the grand artery of the western waters, and landed safely at the very door of the father of Inez.

The joy of Don Augustin, and the embarrassment of the worthy father Ignatius, may be imagined. The former wept and returned thanks to Heaven; the latter returned thanks, and did not weep. The mild provincials were too happy to raise any questions on the character of so joyful a restoration; and, by a sort of general consent, it soon came to be an admitted opinion that the bride of Middleton had been kidnapped by a villain, and that she was restored to her friends by human agency. There were, as respects this belief, certainly a few sceptics, but then they enjoyed their doubts in private, with that species of sublimated and solitary gratification that a miser finds in gazing at his growing, but useless, hoards.

In order to give the worthy priest something to employ his mind, Middleton made him the instrument of uniting Paul and Ellen. The former consented to the ceremony, because he found that all his friends laid great stress on the matter; but shortly after he led his bride into the plains of Kentucky, under the pretence of paying certain customary visits to sundry members of the family of Hover. While there, he took occasion to have the marriage properly solemnised, by a justice of the peace of his acquaintance, in whose ability to forge the nuptial chain he had much more faith than in that of all the gowmsmen within the pale of Rome. Ellen, who appeared conscious that some extraordinary preventives might prove necessary to keep one of so erratic a temper as her partner, within the proper matrimonial boundaries, raised no objections to these double knots, and all parties were content.

The local importance Middleton had acquired, by his union with the daughter of so affluent a proprietor as Don Augustin, united to his personal merit, attracted the attention of the government. He was soon employed in various situations of responsibility and confidence, which both served to elevate his character in the public estimation, and to afford the means of patronage. The bee-hunter was among the first of those to whom he saw fit to extend his favour. It was far from difficult to find situations suited to the abilities of Paul, in the state of society that existed three-and-twenty years ago in those regions. The efforts of Middleton and Inez, in behalf of her husband, were warmly and sagaciously seconded by Ellen, and they succeeded, in process of time, in working a great and beneficial change in his character. He soon became a land-holder, then a prosperous cultivator of the soil, and shortly after a town-officer. By that progressive change in fortune, which in the republic is often seen to be so singularly accompanied by a corresponding improvement in knowledge and self-respect, he went on, from step to step, until his wife enjoyed the maternal delight of seeing her children placed far beyond the danger of returning to that state from which both their parents had issued. Paul is actually at this moment a member of the lower branch of the legislature of the State where he has long resided; and he is even notorious for making speeches that have a tendency to put that deliberative body in good humour, and which, as they are based on great practical knowledge suited to the condition of the country, possess a merit that is much wanted in many more subtle and fine-spun theories, that are daily heard in similar assemblies, to issue from the lips of certain instinctive politicians. But all these happy fruits were the results of much care, and of a long period of time. Middleton, who fills, with a credit better suited to the difference in their educations, a seat in a far higher branch of legislative authority, is the source from which we have derived most of the intelligence necessary to compose our legend. In addition to what he has related of Paul, and of his own continued happiness, he has added a short narrative of what took place in a subsequent visit to the prairies, with which, as we conceive it a suitable termination to what has gone before, we shall judge it wise to conclude our labours.

In the autumn of the year, that succeeded the season, in which the preceding events occurred, the young man, still in the military service, found himself on the waters of the Missouri, at a point not far remote from the Pawnee towns. Released from any immediate calls of duty, and strongly urged to the measure by Paul, who was in his company, he determined to take horse, and cross the country to visit the partisan, and to enquire into the fate of his friend the trapper. As his train was suited to his functions and rank, the journey was effected, with the privations and hardships that are the accompaniments of all travelling in a wild, but without any of those dangers and alarms that marked his former passage through the same regions. When within a proper distance, he despatched an Indian runner, belonging to a friendly tribe, to announce the approach of himself and party, continuing his route at a deliberate pace, in order that the intelligence might, as was customary, precede his arrival. To the surprise of the travellers their message was unanswered. Hour succeeded hour, and mile after mile was passed, without bringing either the signs of an honourable reception, or the more simple assurances of a friendly welcome. At length the cavalcade, at whose head rode Middleton and Paul, descended from the elevated plain, on which they had long been journeying, to a luxuriant bottom, that brought them to the level of the village of the Loups. The sun was beginning to fall, and a sheet of golden light was spread over the placid plain, lending to its even surface those glorious tints and hues, that, the human imagination is apt to conceive, forms the embellishment of still more imposing scenes. The verdure of the year yet remained, and herds of horses and mules were grazing peacefully in the vast natural pasture, under the keeping of vigilant Pawnee boys. Paul pointed out among them, the well-known form of Asinus, sleek, fat, and luxuriating in the fulness of content, as he stood with reclining ears and closed eye-lids, seemingly musing on the exquisite nature of his present indolent enjoyment.

The route of the party led them at no great distance from one of those watchful youths, who was charged with a trust heavy as the principal wealth of his tribe. He heard the trampling of the horses, and cast his eye aside, but instead of manifesting curiosity or alarm, his look instantly returned whence it had been withdrawn, to the spot where the village was known to stand.

"There is something remarkable in all this," muttered Middleton, half offended at what he conceived to be not only a slight to his rank, but offensive to himself, personally; "yonder boy has heard of our approach, or he would not fail to notify his tribe; and yet he scarcely deigns to favour us with a glance. Look to your arms, men; it may be necessary to let these savages feel our strength."

"Therein, Captain, I think you're in an error," returned Paul, "if honesty is to be met on the prairies at all, you will find it in our old friend Hard-Heart; neither is an Indian to be judged of by the rules of a white. See! we are not altogether slighted, for here comes a party at last to meet us, though it is a little pitiful as to show and numbers."

Paul was right in both particulars. A group of horsemen were at length seen wheeling round a little copse, and advancing across the plain directly towards them. The advance of this party was slow and dignified. As it drew nigh, the partisan of the Loups was seen at its head, followed by a dozen younger warriors of his tribe. They were all unarmed, nor did they even wear any of those ornaments or feathers, which are considered testimonials of respect to the guest an Indian receives, as well as evidence of his own importance.

The meeting was friendly, though a little restrained on both sides. Middleton, jealous of his own consideration no less than of the authority of his government, suspected some undue influence on the part of the agents of the Canadas; and, as he was determined to maintain the authority of which he was the representative, he felt himself constrained to manifest a hauteur, that he was far from feeling. It was not so easy to penetrate the motives of the Pawnees. Calm, dignified, and yet far from repulsive, they set an example of courtesy, blended with reserve, that many a diplomatist of the most polished court might have strove in vain to imitate.

In this manner the two parties continued their course to the town. Middleton had time, during the remainder of the ride, to revolve in his mind, all the probable reasons which his ingenuity could suggest for this strange reception. Although he was accompanied by a regular interpreter, the chiefs made their salutations in a manner that dispensed with his services. Twenty times the Captain turned his glance on his former friend, endeavouring to read the expression of his rigid features. But every effort and all conjectures proved equally futile. The eye of Hard-Heart was fixed, composed, and a little anxious; but as to every other emotion, impenetrable. He neither spoke himself, nor seemed willing to invite discourse in his visitors; it was therefore necessary for Middleton to adopt the patient manners of his companions, and to await the issue for the explanation.

When they entered the town, its inhabitants were seen collected in an open space, where they were arranged with the customary deference to age and rank. The whole formed a large circle, in the centre of which, were perhaps a dozen of the principal chiefs. Hard-Heart waved his hand as he approached, and, as the mass of bodies opened, he rode through, followed by his companions. Here they dismounted; and as the beasts were led apart, the strangers found themselves environed by a thousand, grave, composed, but solicitous faces.

Middleton gazed about him, in growing concern, for no cry, no song, no shout welcomed him among a people, from whom he had so lately parted with regret. His uneasiness, not to say apprehensions, was shared by all his followers. Determination and stern resolution began to assume the place of anxiety in every eye, as each man silently felt for his arms, and assured himself, that his several weapons were in a state for service. But there was no answering symptom of hostility on the part of their hosts. Hard-Heart beckoned for Middleton and Paul to follow, leading the way towards the cluster of forms, that occupied the centre of the circle. Here the visitors found a solution of all the movements, which had given them so much reason for apprehension.

The trapper was placed on a rude seat, which had been made, with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. The first glance of the eye told his former friends, that the old man was at length called upon to pay the last tribute of nature. His eye was glazed, and apparently as devoid of sight as of expression. His features were a little more sunken and strongly marked than formerly; but there, all change, so far as exterior was concerned, might be said to have ceased. His approaching end was not to be ascribed to any positive disease, but had been a gradual and mild decay of the physical powers. Life, it is true, still lingered in his system; but it was as if at times entirely ready to depart, and then it would appear to re-animate the sinking form, reluctant to give up the possession of a tenement, that had never been corrupted by vice, or undermined by disease. It would have been no violent fancy to have imagined, that the spirit fluttered about the placid lips of the old woodsman, reluctant to depart from a shell, that had so long given it an honest and an honourable shelter.

His body was placed so as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. His head was bare, the long, thin, locks of grey fluttering lightly in the evening breeze. His rifle lay upon his knee, and the other accoutrements of the chase were placed at his side, within reach of his hand. Between his feet lay the figure of a hound, with its head crouching to the earth as if it slumbered; and so perfectly easy and natural was its position, that a second glance was necessary to tell Middleton, he saw only the skin of Hector, stuffed by Indian tenderness and ingenuity in a manner to represent the living animal. His own dog was playing at a distance, with the child of Tachechana and Mahtoree. The mother herself stood at hand, holding in her arms a second offspring, that might boast of a parentage no less honourable, than that which belonged to the son of Hard-Heart. Le Balafre was seated nigh the dying trapper, with every mark about his person, that the hour of his own departure was not far distant. The rest of those immediately in the centre were aged men, who had apparently drawn near, in order to observe the manner, in which a just and fearless warrior would depart on the greatest of his journeys.

The old man was reaping the rewards of a life remarkable for temperance and activity, in a tranquil and placid death. His vigour in a manner endured to the very last. Decay, when it did occur, was rapid, but free from pain. He had hunted with the tribe in the spring, and even throughout most of the summer, when his limbs suddenly refused to perform their customary offices. A sympathising weakness took possession of all his faculties; and the Pawnees believed, that they were going to lose, in this unexpected manner, a sage and counsellor, whom they had begun both to love and respect. But as we have already said, the immortal occupant seemed unwilling to desert its tenement. The lamp of life flickered without becoming extinguished. On the morning of the day, on which Middleton arrived, there was a general reviving of the powers of the whole man. His tongue was again heard in wholesome maxims, and his eye from time to time recognised the persons of his friends. It merely proved to be a brief and final intercourse with the world on the part of one, who had already been considered, as to mental communion, to have taken his leave of it for ever.

When he had placed his guests in front of the dying man, Hard-Heart, after a pause, that proceeded as much from sorrow as

decorum, leaned a little forward and demanded—

“Does my father hear the words of his son?”

“Speak,” returned the trapper, in tones that issued from his chest, but which were rendered awfully distinct by the stillness that reigned in the place. “I am about to depart from the village of the Loups, and shortly shall be beyond the reach of your voice.”

“Let the wise chief have no cares for his journey,” continued Hard-Heart with an earnest solicitude, that led him to forget, for the moment, that others were waiting to address his adopted parent; “a hundred Loups shall clear his path from briars.”

“Pawnee, I die as I have lived, a Christian man,” resumed the trapper with a force of voice that had the same startling effect upon his hearers, as is produced by the trumpet, when its blast rises suddenly and freely on the air, after its obstructed sounds have been heard struggling in the distance: “as I came into life so will I leave it. Horses and arms are not needed to stand in the presence of the Great Spirit of my people. He knows my colour, and according to my gifts will he judge my deeds.”

“My father will tell my young men, how many Mingoes he has struck, and what acts of valour and justice he has done, that they may know how to imitate him.”

“A boastful tongue is not heard in the heaven of a white man,” solemnly returned the old man. “What I have done, He has seen. His eyes are always open. That, which has been well done, will He remember; wherein I have been wrong will He not forget to chastise, though He will do the same in mercy. No, my son; a Pale-face may not sing his own praises, and hope to have them acceptable before his God.”

A little disappointed, the young partisan stepped modestly back, making way for the recent comers to approach. Middleton took one of the meagre hands of the trapper, and struggling to command his voice, he succeeded in announcing his presence. The old man listened like one whose thoughts were dwelling on a very different subject, but when the other had succeeded in making him understand, that he was present, an expression of joyful recognition passed over his faded features—“I hope you have not so soon forgotten those, whom you so materially served!” Middleton concluded. “It would pain me to think my hold on your memory was so light.”

“Little that I have ever seen is forgotten,” returned the trapper: “I am at the close of many weary days, but there is not one among them all, that I could wish to overlook. I remember you with the whole of your company; ay, and your grand’ter, that went before you. I am glad, that you have come back upon these plains, for I had need of one, who speaks the English, since little faith can be put in the traders of these regions. Will you do a favour to an old and dying man?”

“Name it,” said Middleton; “it shall be done.”

“It is a far journey to send such trifles,” resumed the old man, who spoke at short intervals, as strength and breath permitted; “a far and weary journey is the same; but kindnesses and friendships are things not to be forgotten. There is a settlement among the Otsego hills—”

“I know the place,” interrupted Middleton, observing that he spoke with increasing difficulty; “proceed to tell me, what you would have done.”

“Take this rifle, and pouch, and horn, and send them to the person, whose name is graven on the plates of the stock,—a trader cut the letters with his knife,—for it is long, that I have intended to send him such a token of my love.”

“It shall be so. Is there more that you could wish?”

“Little else have I to bestow. My traps I give to my Indian son; for honestly and kindly has he kept his faith. Let him stand before me.”

Middleton explained to the chief what the trapper had said and relinquished his own place to the other.

“Pawnee,” continued the old man, always changing his language to suit the person he addressed, and not unfrequently according to the ideas he expressed, “it is a custom of my people for the father to leave his blessing with the son, before he shuts his eyes for ever. This blessing I give to you; take it, for the prayers of a Christian man will never make the path of a just warrior, to the blessed prairies, either longer, or more tangled. May the God of a white man look on your deeds with friendly eyes, and may you never commit an act, that shall cause Him to darken His face. I know not whether we shall ever meet again. There are many traditions concerning the place of Good Spirits. It is not for one like me, old and experienced though I am, to set up my opinions against a nation’s. You believe in the blessed prairies, and I have faith in the sayings of my fathers. If both are true, our parting will be final; but if it should prove, that the same meaning is hid under different words, we shall yet stand together, Pawnee, before the face of your Wahcondah, who will then be no other than my God. There is much to be said in favour of both religions, for each seems suited to its own people, and no doubt it was so intended. I fear, I have not altogether followed the gifts of my colour, inasmuch as I find it a little painful to give up for ever the use of the rifle, and the comforts of the chase. But then the fault has been my own, seeing that it could not have been His. Ay, Hector,” he continued, leaning forward a little, and feeling for the ears of the hound, “our parting has come at last, dog, and it will be a long hunt. You have been an honest, and a bold, and a faithful hound. Pawnee, you cannot slay the pup on my grave, for where a Christian dog falls, there he lies for ever; but you can be kind to him, after I am gone, for the love you bear his master.”

“The words of my father are in my ears,” returned the young partisan, making a grave and respectful gesture of assent.

“Do you hear, what the chief has promised, dog?” demanded the trapper, making an effort to attract the notice of the insensible effigy of his hound. Receiving no answering look, nor hearing any friendly whine, the old man felt for the mouth and endeavoured to force his hand between the cold lips. The truth then flashed upon him, although he was far from perceiving the whole extent of the deception. Falling back in his seat, he hung his head, like one who felt a severe and unexpected shock. Profiting by this momentary forgetfulness, two young Indians removed the skin with the same delicacy of feeling, that had induced them to attempt the pious fraud.

“The dog is dead!” muttered the trapper, after a pause of many minutes; “a hound has his time as well as a man and well has he filled his days! Captain,” he added, making an effort to wave his hand for Middleton, “I am glad you have come; for though kind, and well

meaning according to the gifts of their colour, these Indians are not the men, to lay the head of a white man in his grave. I have been thinking too, of this dog at my feet; it will not do to set forth the opinion, that a Christian can expect to meet his hound again; still there can be little harm in placing what is left of so faithful a servant nigh the bones of his master."

"It shall be as you desire."

"I'm glad, you think with me in this matter. In order then to save labour, lay the pup at my feet, or for that matter put him, side by side. A hunter need never be ashamed to be found in company with his dog!"

"I charge myself with your wish."

The old man made a long, and apparently a musing pause. At times he raised his eyes wistfully, as if he would again address Middleton, but some innate feeling appeared always to suppress his words. The other, who observed his hesitation, enquired in a way most likely to encourage him to proceed, whether there was aught else that he could wish to have done.

"I am without kith or kin in the wide world!" the trapper answered: "when I am gone, there will be an end of my race. We have never been chiefs; but honest and useful in our way, I hope it cannot be denied, we have always proved ourselves. My father lies buried near the sea, and the bones of his son will whiten on the prairies—"

"Name the spot, and your remains shall be placed by the side of your father," interrupted Middleton.

"Not so, not so, Captain. Let me sleep, where I have lived, beyond the din of the settlements! Still I see no need, why the grave of an honest man should be hid, like a Red-skin in his ambushment. I paid a man in the settlements to make and put a graven stone at the head of my father's resting place. It was of the value of twelve beaver-skins, and cunningly and curiously was it carved! Then it told to all comers that the body of such a Christian lay beneath; and it spoke of his manner of life, of his years, and of his honesty. When we had done with the Frenchers in the old war, I made a journey to the spot, in order to see that all was rightly performed, and glad I am to say, the workman had not forgotten his faith."

"And such a stone you would have at your grave?"

"I! no, no, I have no son, but Hard-Heart, and it is little that an Indian knows of White fashions and usages. Besides I am his debtor, already, seeing it is so little I have done, since I have lived in his tribe. The rifle might bring the value of such a thing—but then I know, it will give the boy pleasure to hang the piece in his hall, for many is the deer and the bird that he has seen it destroy. No, no, the gun must be sent to him, whose name is graven on the lock!"

"But there is one, who would gladly prove his affection in the way you wish; he, who owes you not only his own deliverance from so many dangers, but who inherits a heavy debt of gratitude from his ancestors. The stone shall be put at the head of your grave."

The old man extended his emaciated hand, and gave the other a squeeze of thanks.

"I thought, you might be willing to do it, but I was backward in asking the favour," he said, "seeing that you are not of my kin. Put no boastful words on the same, but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the holy book; no more no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on 'arth; I need no more."

Middleton intimated his assent, and then followed a pause, that was only broken by distant and broken sentences from the dying man. He appeared now to have closed his accounts with the world, and to await merely for the final summons to quit it. Middleton and Hard-Heart placed themselves on the opposite sides of his seat, and watched with melancholy solicitude, the variations of his countenance. For two hours there was no very sensible alteration. The expression of his faded and time-worn features was that of a calm and dignified repose. From time to time he spoke, uttering some brief sentence in the way of advice, or asking some simple questions concerning those in whose fortunes he still took a friendly interest. During the whole of that solemn and anxious period each individual of the tribe kept his place, in the most self-restrained patience. When the old man spoke, all bent their heads to listen; and when his words were uttered, they seemed to ponder on their wisdom and usefulness.

As the flame drew nigher to the socket, his voice was hushed, and there were moments, when his attendants doubted whether he still belonged to the living. Middleton, who watched each wavering expression of his weather-beaten visage, with the interest of a keen observer of human nature, softened by the tenderness of personal regard, fancied he could read the workings of the old man's soul in the strong lineaments of his countenance. Perhaps what the enlightened soldier took for the delusion of mistaken opinion did actually occur, for who has returned from that unknown world to explain by what forms, and in what manner, he was introduced into its awful precincts? Without pretending to explain what must ever be a mystery to the quick, we shall simply relate facts as they occurred.

The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes, alone, had occasionally opened and shut. When opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds, which hung around the western horizon, reflecting the bright colours, and giving form and loveliness to the glorious tints of an American sunset. The hour—the calm beauty of the season—the occasion, all conspired to fill the spectators with solemn awe. Suddenly, while musing on the remarkable position, in which he was placed, Middleton felt the hand, which he held, grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a moment, he looked about him, as if to invite all in presence to listen (the lingering remnant of human frailty), and then, with a fine military elevation of the head, and with a voice, that might be heard in every part of that numerous assembly the word—

"Here!"

A movement so entirely unexpected, and the air of grandeur and humility, which were so remarkably united in the mien of the trapper, together with the clear and uncommon force of his utterance, produced a short period of confusion in the faculties of all present. When Middleton and Hard-Heart, each of whom had involuntarily extended a hand to support the form of the old man, turned to him again, they found, that the subject of their interest was removed for ever beyond the necessity of their care. They mournfully placed the body in its seat, and Le Balafre arose to announce the termination of the scene, to the tribe. The voice of the old Indian seemed a sort of echo from that invisible world, to which the meek spirit of the trapper had just departed.

"A valiant, a just, and a wise warrior has gone on the path, which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people!" he said.

“When the voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer. Go, my children; remember the just chief of the Pale-faces, and clear your own tracks from briars.”

The grave was made beneath the shade of some noble oaks. It has been carefully watched to the present hour by the Pawnees of the Loop, and is often shown to the traveller and the trader as a spot where a just Whiteman sleeps. In due time the stone was placed at its head, with the simple inscription, which the trapper had himself requested. The only liberty, taken by Middleton, was to add—“May no wanton hand ever disturb his remains!”

